



Why did Henry Ruckle choose to Farm Here?

Henry Ruckle arrived on Salt Spring Island in 1872. He pre-empted 338 acres of land, the best available in the south end, on sea-routes between Victoria and Vancouver.



Valley land

- underlying Ruckle Fault shapes the valley
- tectonic-plate action pushes up the hills

pink + mauve: ~400-million years old
green: ~65-million years old

Henry Ruckle came from a long line of successful farmers of German Palatine heritage. He was born in Ireland, raised from age six on an Ontario farm, went to California in the 1860s, and worked in Washington state logging and milling the giant trees of the Pacific NW—valuable for a West Coast farmer to know.

One of British Columbia's Oldest Family-Run Farms 1872 - 2018

"A man who understands farming and has a little capital will do as well or better here than any place in North America. We hold a very central position as regards markets. ... I lived formerly in Ontario, and consider there is more to be made off a farm here than there. The chief trouble is the clearing."

Henry Ruckle
"Salt Spring Island, 1895"
by Rev. Edward F. Wilson



Soil

- organics washed off hills from the last Ice Age, about 13,000 years ago
- silty clay loam, easy to till

blue: silty clay loam, 1+ m deep
mauve: similar material on a slope



Bedrock

- mostly granite with quartz
- too hard and impervious, in early days, to drill wells

pink/beige/brown: granite
green: much younger sandstone



Water

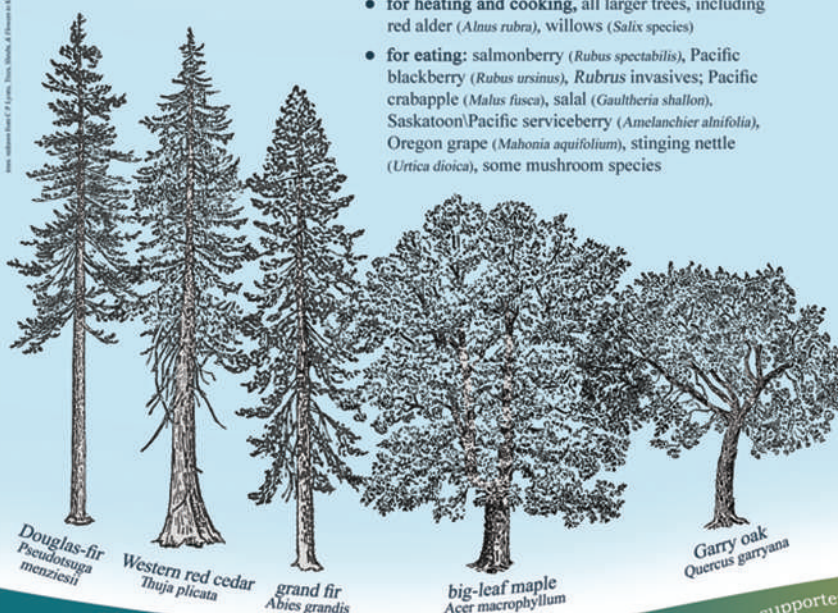
- ocean access for travel, transporting crops
- fresh water for drinking, irrigation

Ruckle Gold!

In 1896, prospectors mined Ruckle quartz seams for gold, a short-lived dream, too little to bother. The covered adit remains, by the NE shore.

Natural Forests: valued ecosystems for timber, firewood, food

- for buildings and fences, softwoods and hardwoods
- for heating and cooking, all larger trees, including red alder (*Alnus rubra*), willows (*Salix* species)
- for eating: salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), Pacific blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), Rubus invasives; Pacific crabapple (*Malus fusca*), salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), Saskatoon/Pacific serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), some mushroom species



Wild Animals: valued species for food



Pacific black duck
Anas superciliosa



Canada goose
Branta canadensis



willow grouse
Lagopus lagopus



sockeye salmon
Oncorhynchus nerka



yellow-eye rockfish
Sebastes ruberrimus



Pacific herring
Clupea pallasii



blue mussels
Mytilus edulis



Pacific littleneck clams
Protothaca staminea



Dungeness crab
Metacarcinus magister



black-tailed deer
Odocoileus hemionus columbianus

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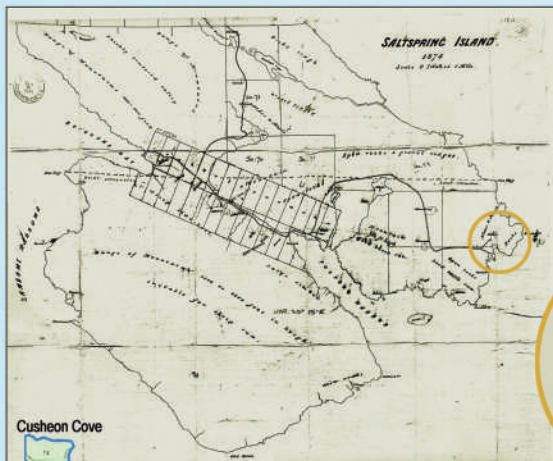
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What made Henry Ruckle's Farm a success?

Generations of Ruckles had been successful farmers. In 1709, Roekles moved from Palatine Germany to Ireland. In 1841, Henry's family moved to Upper Canada (later, Ontario), when he was six. At age 37, he moved to Beaver Point.



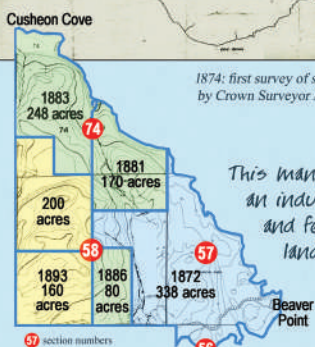
1874: first survey of south Salt Spring Island by Crown Surveyor Ashdown Henry Green



Beaver Point's namesake steamship, the Beaver, a Hudson's Bay Company fur-factory vessel, arrived on the coast in 1836.



Henry's first 30 acres cleared and fenced



This man has the making of a good farm and he seems an industrious fellow. ... He has about 30 acres cleared and fenced. [NNW] of his fields, there is some very good land ... timber on it is alder willow and some maple.

Ashdown Green, 1874 September

British Columbia land pre-emption system

Starting in 1859, British-subject men could claim land, then clear, fence, and farm it while residing on it, and thus qualify to buy it for \$1/acre.

Easily cleared fields

Henry cleared 30 acres in two years, much more than most pre-emptors, mostly removing "Alders & Maples" (see 1874 map), not massive Douglas-fir and Western red cedar.

Hired help

Likely Hawai'ian men, former Hudson's Bay Company employees.

Expansions

After 22 years, Henry owned 1,196 acres.

Diverse Farm Produce

tree fruits (mostly apples and pears); nut trees; beans, peas, beets, onions, carrots, turnips, rutabagas/Swedes, potatoes for food and seed; hay and grains for livestock: sheep, pigs, cows for milk and cream, beef cattle, turkeys, chickens



Hay and Apples by Gwen Ruckle, ~1990s

Progressive

In 1904, Henry bought one of the island's first steam-powered threshing machine, which neighbours also used. Second and third generations tried fertilizers and pesticides, which proved toxic.

Access to Markets

Beaver Point offered an important shipping connection between Victoria and Vancouver, benefitting Ruckles and neighbours.

Beaver Point wharf a vital community hub

1895: Henry built Beaver Point wharf for steamships carrying crops, passengers, and mail.

1904: B.C. Public Works paid for the wharf right-of-way.

1910: Henry welcomed a sea captain to build a house by the wharf, to run a store and telegraph station from it.

1916: The Pattersons, D. Henry Ruckle's brother-in-law and bride, took over the house, store, and telegraph.

1918: Pattersons took over postmaster duties from D. Henry.

1951: The wharf was decommissioned; Pattersons moved house (literally) and shop to Fulford. Store closed in 2011.



Beaver Point wharf, general store, telegraph, and post office, 1926 or 1927

Ella Anna Kristensen*

A good farm wife
helps make a good farm great.

- grew up on a farm in northern Norway
- moved to the U.S. west coast about 1870
- was widowed by a mine explosion, with an infant son
- Henry found her when looking for a cook for his crew.
- She agreed to cook, if he'd marry her and adopt her son.

at Beaver Point

- kept a large garden, at north end of fields
 - kept poultry, including turkeys
 - raised two sons, two daughters
 - sons became farmers

* likely Ella Anna's preferred spelling of her maiden name, as noted and corrected on her daughters' birth certificates



Beaver Point Wharf by Agnes Ruckle, early 1900s

Beaver Point Post Office

In 1884, Beaver Point became its own postal community, separate from Burgoyne and Ganges. Postal Money Orders were vital to rural businesses, to send and receive payments, equivalent to bank transactions. Canada Post continues this service.

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Meet the Ruckle Family of Beaver Point

Henry Ruckle

- visited Ontario family farm with Ella Anna and children
- three Ruckle cousins moved to Cascade, B.C., to farm
- sister Agnes Fullerton and family moved to Victoria

... a fine handsome old fellow, very straight, and very good natured.

Reverend Edward Wilson's diary, 1894 September

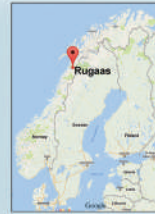


Henry Ruckle
B: Jul 12 1835
Limerick, Ireland
D: Jul 4 1913
Beaver Point

M: Dec 8 1877
Victoria



Ella Anna Kristensen
B: Aug 18 1841
Velfjord, Norway
D: Dec 15 1930
Beaver Point



Ella Anna Christensdatter (birth record) / Kristensen

- Norwegian-born, fourth of six children, arrived in U.S. circa 1870
- close Hanson kin emigrated to WA, 1883; visited occasionally

[Mrs. Ruckle] could speak but little English ... The wife was a great talker, in her broken English—and had always a great deal to say from a religious point of view. This was the only house on the island where [I] was ever asked to conduct family prayer.

Reverend Edward Wilson's diary, 1894 September

all places are in British Columbia unless otherwise noted



Alfred Ruckle
B: Jan 1 1877
D: Jun 6 1952
Victoria hospital

M: Jul 17 1905
Salt Spring



Martha Helen Margison
B: Mar 31 1874
Hull Yorkshire Eng
D: Jun 11 1967
Ganges hospital



Ella Ruckle
B: Feb 12 1879
Salt Spring
D: Apr 11 1923
Moresby Island



George Stanley Harris
B: Mar 9 1881
Rockwood Ontario
D: Nov 30 1966
Victoria hospital



Agnes Ruckle
B: Jul 9 1881
Salt Spring
D: Aug 7 1905
Cascade



Daniel Henry Ruckle
B: Mar 6 1884
Salt Spring
D: Mar 19 1972
Ganges hospital

M: Mar 11 1908
Victoria



Mary Galloway (Polly) Patterson
B: Oct 9 1885
Glasgow Scotland
D: Apr 22 1972
Beaver Point
Polly's brother William Patterson and wife Emily ran the Beaver Point general store and post office, where they lived and raised their son Robert (Bob).

Thomas: died from workplace injury
Agnes: nurse, beekeeper, peace activist
Gordon: master farmer
Lotus Fraser: Gordon's school classmate, homemaker, sheep farmer, wool crafts, family history
Norman: master farmer died of Hodgkin's lymphoma perhaps from farm chemicals
Nan: flower gardener, seamstress, homemaker for parents
Helen: school counsellor, math/P.E. teacher, B.C. towns, Victoria



Thomas Moresby Harris
B: Feb 25 1917
Moresby Island
D: Feb 13 1941
Victoria hospital



Agnes Ruckle Harris
B: Jun 24 1919
Moresby Island
D: May 16 2011
Issaquah, WA
married Kenneth Schmoie
7 children



Henry Gordon Ruckle
B: Apr 30 1909
Salt Spring
D: Jun 28 1997
Ganges hospital

M: Jul 30 1930
Victoria



Lotus Lillian Fraser
B: Feb 2 1911
Trout Lake City
D: Oct 27 2010
Ganges



William Norman Ruckle
B: Mar 20 1911
Salt Spring
D: Apr 26 1953
Victoria hospital



Ella Anna (Nan) Ruckle
B: Sep 4 1921
Salt Spring
D: Mar 3 1969
Ganges hospital



Helen Agnes Ruckle
B: Dec 20 1924
Salt Spring
D: Jun 15 2018
Victoria hospital

To see Lotus in videos by neighbour Harry Burton, web-search "salt spring archives characters lotus ruckle"

circa 1896



standing: D. Henry, Anna Hanson with Ida (born 1895), possibly Louis Hanson
seated on porch: Henry Ruckle, Ella Anna, Alfred, Rev. Christen Lyng Hanson
seated on grass: Ella and Agnes in white dresses with unidentified family



Mary Gwendolyn (Gwen) Ruckle
Birth: Nov 1 1931
Salt Spring
Death: May 19 2006
Ganges hospital



Gordon Henry Ruckle
Birth: Jun 28 1937
Salt Spring
Death: Apr 22 2010
Victoria

Gwen: sheep farmer, visual artist, family historian
To hear Gwen and her mother speak:
"salt spring archives audio" links 12A, 52, 153
Henry: teacher in Victoria, travel agent

Helen Agnes Ruckle was the last of her Beaver Point family to pass on, leaving the farm management and operation entirely to BC Parks and its contractor(s).

1950



Lotus, Gordon, D. Henry, Norman, Alfred, Polly, Helen
seated: Nan, Henry, Gwen, Helen

1973 February

Gulf Islands Driftwood

Serving the islands that make Beautiful British Columbia Beautiful

Ruckle Farm Is New Park

— NEARLY 1200 ACRES

Biggest provincial park west of the mainland has been established on Salt Spring Island. Ruckle property at Beaver Point has been purchased by the province for park purposes.

New park is almost 1,200 acres in area and adjoining the older Beaver Point Park of 43 acres. Park has been sold to the government by Henry G. Ruckle for \$150,000, payable in annual instalments of \$10,000 and at no interest. The magnificent property which includes the Beaver Point peninsula has a wealth of peatlands, four times the value of the island.

Beaver Point was once the centre of the southern community of Salt Spring Island, where the ferry called at the lower end of the island and there was a post office and general store located there.

The Ruckle family will continue to farm the 500 acres under cultivation and to live in the farm house, which is a landmark there. They will have a life-long lease on the property. Announcement of the purchase was made in the Legislature last week by Recreation Minister Robert Williams. The Ruckle family is one of the pioneer families of the island.

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Ruckle Family Land & Helping Hands

"You can't own land. You can only preserve it for future generations."
grandson Henry Gordon Ruckle

from east of campground
to Beaver Point

Google Earth



oldest photograph of the Ruckles' farm, late 1800s, with Henry & Ella Anna



white lines: 1874 survey map
yellow dotted line: first 30 acres cleared
green lines: 1930s extent of fields

first men hired to help clear land and farm:
likely Hawai'iian British subjects and nearby land-owners



Hawai'iian neighbours' properties

Farm Help

1880-84: Swedish Hired Hand

Charles Ohlsen, a Lutheran, could speak to Ella Anna in Swedish. In the 1881 census, Alfred Ruckle's birth father was listed as Swedish. Olson, as he re-spelled his name, married a young widow by Stowell Lake and became the owner of her estate.

1891 census: Greek-Coast Salish and English Help

Neighbour Alex King, age 14, lived with Ruckles and worked as a domestic; English farmer, John Willey, was also in the household.

1911 Census: Japanese Workers

First record of a Japanese worker at the farm, K. Omadan/Omatae, in Canada since 1907. His wife wasn't counted in the census. In 1942 April, all Japanese and Japanese-Canadian residents were removed from the coast as enemy aliens, sent to internment camps, stripped permanently of their lands, livelihoods, and possessions



Omadan/Omatae & wife, circa 1910



left side of the building, housing for Japanese workers
In 1930, the right-side addition was built and the whole structure used for pigs.
Japanese housing, now removed, was also provided by the north fields.

Building Homes and Community



classic Ontario-homestead log-work



Beaver Point School, 1911



Samuel Beddis



Fred Raynes

1870s-80s: This log cabin was perhaps Henry's first home; it was used by Henry, son Henry, and Gordon for blacksmithing.

1885: Beaver Point School opened; spearheaded by the Ruckle and McLennan families, built by Samuel Beddis, and named, as required, for the nearest wharf, not built yet. Now Little Red School-house, a pre-school.

1887: Burgoyne Methodist Church (now United) built; Ella Anna attended the rest of her life.

1894: St. Mary's Anglican Church, Fulford, built by Fred Raynes; Henry donated funds, attended, and helped run it; Agnes, Henry, Ella Anna buried there.

1895: Beaver Point wharf built; steamship service started, with several sailings each week.

1910: Beaver Point store & telegraph service began, in a home built by tugboat Captain Arthur C. Good.



1951 August: back: Gwen Ruckle, Hudson Lee, Tom Lee, Harvey Reynolds, front: Lloyd Reynolds, Don Fraser, Norman Ruckle, Gordon Ruckle, Reg Price, Daniel Henry Ruckle

work bees and harvest help, a long tradition

1990: Mike Lane became Ruckles' volunteer farm hand.

1998: Mike and wife Marjorie leased the land and the Norman house, for a small fee, making their living from their labours. **Since 2018:** The Lanes continue as BC Parks' farm manager and operator.

circa 1876: Henry hired a Victoria contractor to build his wood-frame home.

1886: The Ruckles hired Fulford's Fred Raynes to add the kitchen.

1906-1907: Alfred and D. Henry hired Samuel Beddis and sons to build their homes. They also hired local men as labourers; on an afternoon off, playing cards, one shot and killed another.



Norman's house, built mid-1930s, not lived in until the mid-1970s



Henry's house, late 1970s



Daniel's house, circa 1907



Alfred's house, circa 1910

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Ruckle kin



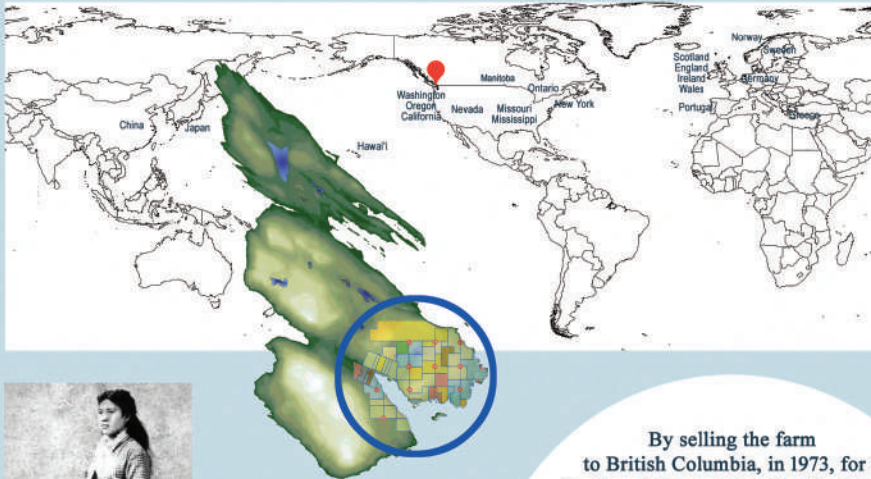
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Ruckle Family Community Connections

The Ruckle family and farm thrived in a diverse, tolerant neighbourhood, where cooperation helped grow crops, markets, and an unusually rich and supportive local culture.



The first newcomers arrived from around the world. About half of the men raised families with Coast Salish women, some with mixed heritage.



Theodore Trage family

- Theo from Germany, arrived on Salt Spring in 1860; two German friends farmed nearby
- Indigenous wife, Susannah George
- raised four accomplished children, who raised their families on island
- very successful farmer and orchardist, on extensive acreage
- built first private Fulford wharf

John Pappenberger family

- Ruckles' next door neighbours, mid-1880s to 1960
- Bavarian father, Indigenous mother
- Indigenous wife, Mary Ann Piele
- raised eight children, some of whom stayed on Salt Spring
- successful farmer and orchardist



By selling the farm to British Columbia, in 1973, for a fraction of its market value, the Ruckle family ensured that their community contributions would last well beyond their own lives.

The Ruckles are a very special family. They helped in the district so much. Everything in progress, they helped to do it. Very kind. They help everyone.

neighbour Sophie Purser King, 1975
born on Salt Spring in 1880, English father,
Indigenous mother, convent-raised,
Leon King's wife, died 1975

"Big John" Sparrow

- Norwegian, worked on an American survey ship
- Fulford farmer, logger, 1860 to 1906
- could speak Norwegian with Ella Anna Ruckle
- wed twice to Indigenous women
- some children were long-term Salt Springers
- donated the land for Burgoyne School and St. Mary's Church



St. Mary's Church
Fulford Harbour
resting place of
Henry, Ella Anna
and Agnes Ruckle



Maria (Ma-rye-ah) Mahoi Douglas Fisher families

- post-humously famous neighbour
- Hawai'ian father, Indigenous mother
- midwife, fisher
- wife of Scotch-American whaling captain, Abel Douglas, had eight children
- wife of English-Indigenous logger, cedar-worker, George Fisher, had eight more children
- They lived to old age on Russell Island.



top: Peavine-Kahou cabin, 1911
left: present day

PRIVATE RESIDENCE
NO PUBLIC ACCESS

John Peavine Kahou family

- Hawai'ian father, Indigenous mother
- married Maria Mahoi's sister Mary Haumea, whose parents lived nearby
- 1883: Henry Ruckle helped Kahou pre-empt 160 acres, with a year-around, low-yield pond
- built a log cabin, planted an orchard
- 1892: is said to have killed his wife and twins in utero, then died in 1893
- Ruckle bought land, 1893 May



Mary, unknown, Charlie Tsalt at Reserve home

Charlie and Mary Tsalt came often to Beaver Point, to fish and to sell their catch off the wharf.



Alexander McLennan family

- long-time best friends of the Ruckles
- met Henry Ruckle while working in Victoria store
- Scotsman, with Scots-English Canadian wife Elizabeth
- Henry convinced them to buy neighbourhood land.
- farmer, some fruit trees, postmaster 1886-1908
- parents of eight children born over 22 years
- helped found, build, and run Beaver Point School



James Monk family

- 1893, arrived from England, taught school in Victoria
- 1904, bought Haumea estate, with its successful orchard
- wed May Bown, English-Canadian from Manitoba
- raised four children; expanded the farm and orchard
- good friends of Alfred and D. Henry Ruckle families
- taught a few years at Beaver Point School
- widowed 1923; only son died in 1935
- retired to Vancouver Island



King brothers:
surviving son Leon a
talented musician, played
at many events with
Alfred and Helen Ruckle



Mary Tsish King



Alfred Ruckle, John Stevens

Joseph/John King family

- Greek, from a Smyrna shipping family
- changed name to get a fishing licence
- long time Fraser River salmon fisher
- 1878: pre-empted waterfront acreage off present-day King Road; a haphazard farmer and orchardist
- great singer; taught neighbourhood children to swim
- Indigenous wife, Mary Tsish, likely John Pappenberger's oldest sister
- raised two daughters, three sons; two died as young men at sea, sealing in a storm

John Stevens family

- Greek from the island of Psara
- took an English name for a licence to fish the Fraser River and pre-empt land
- married J. King's step-daughter, age ~14
- wedding present: a strip of King land
- acquired many more nearby acres
- family became successful sheep farmers
- grandson continues today

Some old names remain: Peavine cabin, McLennan Road, Monkswood Place, King Road, Stevens Road.
Other names have vanished. Lotus Ruckle's family bought Trages' old property, leaving her family's names: Fraser Road, Menhinick Drive.

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Beaver Point view
to the east

Ruckle Family and Neighbours Fine Arts & Crafts

Ruckle farm was an important arts hub on Salt Spring Island for 100+ years,
where aesthetics and beauty mattered as much as food production and sales.

Matriarch Ella Anna Ruckle
encouraged her children's artistry.



Norwegian rosemaling
on Ella Anna's travel trunk



Helen Margison Ruckle: made yarn from Ruckle sheep's wool,
experimented making dyes, hooked countless rugs, painted pictures



vest knitted by D. Henry,
Gordon in a farm vest,
Lotus spinning



Lotus and Gwen: made yarn from farm
sheep, knitted garments galore from Gwen's patterns



Alfred: musician, luthier, woodworker

- lived in stylish Queen Anne house
- built 100+ stringed instruments to play, sell, and gift
- built furniture and a sleek boat with mid-ship motor
- with Helen, landscaped large yard with artistically placed, unusual plants



FIREFWOOD WAS FIRST USED by Alfred Ruckle, shown above
with his wife, to make stringed instruments. The remaining fiddle,
viola, two violins and guitar were on display at the Salt Spring Island
Art Exhibition and were made from maple, basswood, spruce and pine
wood found on the island.



above: details from gun cabinet
below: gun-leg table

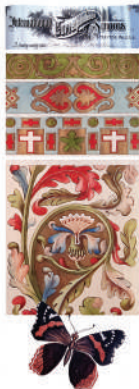


Ella: art student, painter, diarist

- attended the Art Institute of Chicago, made two school art tours of Europe;
- first trip included Morocco, tour teacher a celebrated floral artist
- the diary of her first trip now owned by great-granddaughter named Ella
- painted rosemaling-style dogwood flowers on family home parlour door
- one signed painting remains of her work, the small still life shown below
- numerous unsigned florals may be hers, if not Aunt Helen's



far left: top part of door
middle: only known signed piece
right 1912 travel diary
below: one of several florals
none signed



Agnes: art student, painter

- teacher, Cascade, B.C.; quit to paint full time
- studied Ornamental Design by correspondence
- from teens to 1905, sold many landscape oils
- age 24, drowned trying to save a friend

The last four years of her life she devoted to
landscape painting ... It is said that some of the
wealthiest people on the coast treasure very
highly some of Miss Ruckle's landscape gems.

Grand Forks Evening Sun, August 8, 1905



Coal Harbour, Vancouver, B.C.
Hawai'ian-First Nation community



Beaver Point view



Gwen: art student, painter, visual documentarist

- studied art by correspondence: Art 20 and 30, B.C. curriculum; earned
a Commercial Art diploma from Great-Aunt Agnes' International school
- created an extensive, rich visual record of life on her beloved farm and
island, which she seldom left
- reached her stride in oils



above, clockwise:
Beaver Point camping,
Patterson home, farm sheep



mature work: nature at hand, close in heart



Sophie Purser King

with husband, Leon King, built 80+ boats, first from beach-combed,
hand-hewn logs, then from local Bulman Mill lumber



James Monk's boat, likely King-built,
still in island waters today;
circa 1911 photo



- long-time Ruckle neighbour and friend
- in middle age, made driftwood sculptures,
- created a collection of 115



from far left: eagle
mallard on a branch
Ogopogo
self-portrait



James (Jim) Monk

- woodcarving
- woodturning
- furniture building



young flicker from a dead apple tree
grown by Hawai'ian William Haumea

All art and craftworks shown here
are in private collections.

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