

A Brief History of Farming on Salt Spring Island

Salt Spring Island "will always be remembered as absolutely the first agricultural settlement in the then Colony of Vancouver Island." *Edward Mallandaine in his B. C. Directory, 1887*

- 1859 first 17 settlers arrive to begin farming on Salt Spring
- 1859 to 2010 seed companies growing all their own seeds on Salt Spring
- 1859 to 1863 Begg's Nursery serving BC
- 1913 to 1930 James Seed Company distributing to the Empire and Commonwealth
- 2010 Salt Spring Seeds distributing worldwide
- 1860 cattle came by boat and swam ashore
- 1871 Salt Spring Farmer J.P. Booth elected to 1st BC Legislature
- 1902 J.P. Booth appointed Speaker
- 1886 Marketing became easier with better steamship service...goods previously rowed by boat to Victoria
- 1892 Dept. Of Agriculture reported the following on the Farms in the Beaver Point Area:
- Quantity of land cultivated: 280 acres
 - Number of tons of grain produced: 20 tons
 - Number of tons of hay produced: 220 tons
 - Number of tons of root crops produced: 150 tons
 - Number of tons of fruit produced: 30 tons
 - Number of cattle owned: 90 head
 - Number of horses owned: 23 head
 - Number of sheep owned: 650 head
 - Number of swine owned: 65 head
- As stated, these numbers are only for the Beaver Point Area but are an indication of general farm activity on the island.*
- The largest orchard on the Island had 1600 Apple Trees. They were shipping 1800 to 2400 boxes of apples per year @ 40 lbs. per box.
- 1896 First Fall Fair on Salt Spring
- 1904 to 1957 The Creamery Co-operative was the mainstay of the Island's economy. Virtually every farmer on the Island sold to the creamery. Peak output of the creamery came in 1928 and about 140,000 lbs. of butter were produced annually.
- 1948 The years following the second World War saw a steady decline in agriculture on Salt Spring.
- 1976 The revival of the Fall Fair saw a renewed interest in agriculture and a slow turn-around began.
- 2008 In January 2008, an Area Farm Plan for Salt Spring Island was introduced to the community. Entitled "Plan to Farm," this plan will hopefully return agriculture to it's once held lofty heights in the economy and life style of Salt Spring Island.