

Friday Harbor Journal
Articles relating to Strawberry Barreling Building

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7/18/1935—ORCAS BERRY GROWERS MEET

Plans for Barreling Plant are Discussed.

Members of the Orcas Island Berry Growers Association met July 10, at Olga, with Mr. W.P. McCaffray and Mr. Aspinwold of the National Fruit Canning Company.

At this meeting plans were discussed for establishing a cold pack barreling station at Olga. Mr. McCaffray's offer of furnishing machinery and material, if the growers furnished the site and erected the building, was unanimously accepted.

The National Canning Company can handle up to 3,000 barrels from this station. The association members feel this should stimulate berry growing on the Island, as they will barrel strawberries and raspberries if enough acreage is planted. They will also take sweet cherries.

The fruit after cold packing with sugar in barrels will be shipped to Bellingham for refrigeration.

3/19/1936—ORCAS BERRY GROWERS FORM ORGANIZATION

According to an Olympia news item articles of incorporation have been filed by the Orcas Island Berry Growers' Association. The papers were filed by Mrs. Ralph Pinneo of West Sound. The incorporators are George Loomis of Olga, and other Orcas Island berry growers.

4/16/36—ORCAS STRAWBERRY PLANTS GO TO OREGON

Glen Rodenberger, "strawberry king" of Orcas Island, Tuesday shipped 100,000 strawberry plants to Gresham, Oregon. The plants were loaded on a big truck and brought across on the ferry to the Chuckanut landing and then forwarded to the Oregon destination.

Specializing in the growing of strawberries, strawberry plants and asparagus, Rodenberger has land between Olga and Doe Bay on Orcas Island. It is said there are only three certified strawberry plant growers in the state of Washington and one of these is Rodenberger.

Strawberries from Orcas Island are usually a week or more earlier reaching the markets than those grown on the mainland in this part of the state.—Bellingham Herald

3/25/37—GOOD DEMAND FOR STRAWBERRY PLANTS

Glen Rodenberger of Olga, well known strawberry raiser, spent Tuesday in Friday Harbor, attending to business matters. Mr. Rodenberger says at present he has a crew of nearly 30 persons employed in his fields preparing strawberry plants for shipment. He reports, so far this season he has shipped over one million plants, one of the larger orders going to a raiser in Oregon.

5/6/37—FUTURE BRIGHT FOR STRAWBERRY MARKET

In an interview by a representative of the Northwest Farm News, with Glen Rodenberger of Olga, he is quoted as saying the berry market looks good for this year. He expects his first berries will be ready for market about May 28, this year—just seven weeks to the day from the time the first blossoms appeared. At the peak of the season he expects to have 90 pickers at work.

It is reported there are 32 acres on Orcas Island planted to strawberries, half of this number being Mr. Rodenberger's. The Orcas growers have formed their own association and are planning to put in their own barreling plant, some time in the near future.

10/21/1937—BERRY GROWING IS PROFITABLE

Orcas Island Peculiarly Adapted To Strawberry Culture

(By W.R. Griffin)

With the one hundred and nine tons of strawberries being shipped from the Island during the past season and with the estimated local consumption, which is estimated to have been another five tons, making 114 tons together with the million and a half young plants that were shipped from the island early last spring, should be ample proof that Orcas Island is especially adapted to the culture of strawberries.

The growers were advanced six cents a pound, or \$120.00 per ton at picking time and just recently they received a bonus of one cent a pound and they are almost certain to receive another two cents a pound when the berries are disposed of by the cannery, making nine cents a pound.

The cost of harvesting the berries from the patch to the cannery, was three cents a pound, or \$60.00 per ton, making a grand total of \$6,840. that was distributed among the Islanders for picking and for Island trucks in transporting the berries to the cannery. The Island growers are assured of getting a barreling station on the Island before the next season crop. At a recent meeting of the growers a site was picked for the new plant, which will be located at the junction of the Olga and Doe Bay roads near Olga.

The cannery will advance the cost of the material and the growers are to do all the work, it is estimated that the plant will pay for itself in less than two years, in the loss by shrinkage in transportation. In the past it would be two or three o'clock in the morning before the berries could be put in sugar due to the congestion of trucks at the cannery. Berries that were in perfect condition when leaving the patch would be off color when sorted at the cannery and thrown out with a loss of the berries and transportation.

With a barreling station on the Island the berries will be taken from the patch and put in sugar as fast as they are picked, without any loss and while they have their color.

With a barreling system, berries are now shipped to places where fresh strawberries and strawberry shortcake was unknown.

The much rain at the beginning of the harvest this year, it is estimated destroyed 30 tons of berries, while on the other hand, the rain prolonged the barreling season so as to make up a portion of the first loss.

Of the 114 tons of berries harvested on the Island this season, Glen Rodenberger, sometimes referred to as the Orcas Island Strawberry King produced 73 tons.

After the berries were all in the cannery and the smoke had cleared away, Mr. and Mrs. Rodenberger took a little vacation trip through southern Washington and Oregon. While on the trip they visited some of their customers who bought plants from them last spring and they found that the berries looked fine and the growers were much enthused over their new venture.

While on their trip they received a long list of orders for new plants to be shipped in the early spring, since coming home the orders are still pouring in for plants. Glen thinks now that he will be able to dispose of from two to three million plants this coming spring, which will mean thousands of dollars more for the Islanders for preparing the plants for shipment, as was last spring. Mr. Rodenberger will have 30 acres of bearing berries this coming season as compared to 15 acres this past season.

Cherries will also be prepared at the barreling station. Loganberries are also being considered, but the logans are limited to quantity. This season they would have brought 10 cents a pound; it is claimed they can be raised for six cents at a profit.

Other growers on the Island are, Leatherwood, Keele, Mrs. Boyer, Mrs. Myers, Regan, Banner, Oscar Carlson, Hagen, Ralph Pinneo, and Culver Willis.

11/4/1937—BERRY GROWERS BUILD BARRELING PLANT

Members of the Orcas Island Berry Growers' Association, poured concrete last week for the foundation of their barreling plant located on the north line of Olga. This week they are erecting the building which is to be 30x80 feet, constructed of lumber and cedar shingles. The plan is to barrel other fruit as well as strawberries.

6/9/1938—exert from Olga news

Our hot summer weather may be ideal for shearing, but what the strawberries in Glen Rodenberger's patch need is a good soaking rain. Nevertheless, the barreling station at Olga opened its doors for the first time on Monday, and packed and shipped thirteen barrels of berries.

6/16/1938—OLGA BARRELING PLANT IS PLACE OF ACTIVITY

Olga's new industry, the barreling station, is a busy place every afternoon after the first strawberries come in from the fields.

The berries are hulled and packed into flat cannery crates of twelve boxes by the pickers in the fields, and are brought into the station by trucks. They are poured first into a tank of constantly running water from which they are picked up by a wide chain metal conveyor belt. They are sprayed again on the belt and passed onto a grader rack.

Only berries of a certain size are barreled. Those too small fall through the grader rack. Another long, wide, revolving belt takes the berries off, and on this belt they are sorted by girls who remove the green berries and those on which the hulls have been left. Another series of three grading racks sort the berries according to size; large, medium and small. They then fall into troughs leading into barrels.

The barrels rest on square metal plates which move constantly up and down with a jarring motion, packing the berries down solid as they fall into the barrels. The berries

are packed alternately, 107 pounds of sugar to 318 pounds of berries, so that the sugared berries in each barrel weigh exactly 425 pounds.

By the time the barrels are ready to seal, they look absolutely delicious and would please the most fastidious housekeeper. Trucks take them across on the evening ferry and down to Everett the same day, because it is necessary that they be frozen solid before they have a chance to ferment.

The station now ships an average of 17 barrels a day. At present they handle only strawberries, but other fruit could be handled in the same manner if produced in sufficient quantities.—L.W.

8/7/1938—BARRELING STATION CLOSED FOR SEASON.

It looks like the strawberry season is finished for 1938. The barreling station at Olga closed its doors on June 29, after a fair season.

Due to the long dry spell, the yield was considerably below what was expected earlier in the season. There were approximately 600 barrels of berries packed and shipped. Six hundred and seventy sacks of Washington grown sugar was used in the process.

With the increased acreage for next year, we expect that the plant will be a place of real activity.--W.

6/8/1939—excerpt from the Olga news

The berry barreling plant began operations on Tuesday. Berry fields are dotted with pickers from all parts of the Island as well as from the mainland. Recent rains have benefited the berry fields.

2/20/1941---**LARGE BERRY CROP PREDICTED FOR ORCAS.**

GLEN RODENBERGER ENTERING HIS THIRTEENTH YEAR OF BERRY PRODUCTION

The outlook is promising for a bumper crop of strawberries on Orcas Island this season. There are 133 acres of berries planted on the island.

Glen Rodenberger of Olga, who is the largest grower, has 60 acres and is entering his 13th year of raising strawberries out of the 17 years he has spent on Orcas Island. For the past seven years he has turned his attention to the marketing of certified plants.

This year he will dig 25 acres of plants to fill spring orders, which from present indications will be between two and a half to three million plants. The task of digging and preparing the plants for shipment begins about March 1st. Seventy men and women will be employed, and weather permitting, it is expected the job will be finished in about six weeks.

A year ago Mr. Rodenberger purchased what is known and referred to as “the big fruit ranch” near Eastsound. The farm consists of 213 acres, 110 cleared of which amount 70 acres is suitable for strawberries. Since taking the place over Mr. Rodenberger has had a gang of men busy removing rocks and pulling out orchards and

preparing the 70 acres for strawberries. He will set 25 acres this spring and hopes to have the remainder planted in two years.

He recently returned from a trip through southern Oregon, where he visited some of the larger barreling plants and met prominent berry growers there. The general opinion is that the growers will be able to get a better price for barreling berries this season.

The little barreling plant at Olga, owned and operated by the growers of Orcas Island, last season turned out 713 barrels of 500 pounds each; and 657 30-pound cans of strawberries, about 215 tons, besides the local consumption and berries shipped in crates.

2/20/1941---STRAWBERRY HARVESTING

Another year of seasons has brought the harvest of the tasty Marshall strawberry, a great industry of Orcas Island, to a close.

Have you ever picked these delicious berries? Really picked day after day, disregarding or overcoming the accompanying physical effects that grips a picker?

Well, getting up at six and being out in the refreshing morning air, surrounded by all the glorious trees and shrubs which seem to be alive with our faithful feathered friends whose lilting notes and calls resounding everywhere, really does cause one to be profoundly thankful to be in such a peaceful place—such a contrast to Europe!

But as picking progresses, how one's anatomy groans and aches with every change of movement. The muscles get so sore that it seems they are inadequate to reach over the osseous portion, especially the patellas, where it is imperative to have added padding..

We try one knee, the change is restful, but how soon we need to change to both knees in order to spare the seeming complete snapping of some other part—so with a sigh we try squatting, but the restful change lasts, oh, so short, and standing is referred to, but bending over brings other unendurable aches—so we seek another change, all the time making strong attempts to marshal our gray matter so that our mental attitude would be pleasantly superior to our physical ailments and we are surprised that in an incredible short time the “carriers” are full and there is rejoicing that the “flats are mounting higher and higher so that at quitting time, our minds can delete our soreness with the satisfaction that “something attempted, something done, has earned a night's repose”.

Now let us visit the barreling station located at Olga. Here are brought all the berries from the different growers, unloaded and stacked separately. Each owner's berries are registered and weighed, then “run through” before beginning another owner's berries.

Then the “tender” at the washing machine places a wire frame (reminding one of the diaphragm in an oven) over each flat holding the 12 boxes in place while the berries fall through the wire into the tank of water. They are then whisked up on to a wire belt and sprayed for a thorough cleaning, passing onto a compact belt they slowly pass the scrutinizing view of several women sorters who remove all imperfections.

The berries are then ready to be graded, so they travel on the grading belt, the smallest falling through first, then the medium into barrels, and slowly the barrel that receives the mammoth ones is filled up.

And all this time the whole apparatus appears to have the “jitters” or “peristaltic action”, jolting the berries along. Even the receiving barrels stand on a moveable plate that periodically gets a severe jolt which settles the luscious clean berries into the excellent supply of sugar that is constantly being added as the depth of the berries increase.

The filled barrels are then rolled with adept masculine strength onto scales, weighed, rolled off and the tops sealed with perfect accuracy. It is then labeled correctly and rolled away, ready for the truck which takes them to the ferry which takes them to the mainland where they are placed in cold storage, so as to be in readiness for thousands of fastidious epicureans who know how to serve these delectable wonder strawberries from Orcas Island.

7/10/1941---ORCAS STRAWBERRY HARVEST IS HEAVY

Orcas Island strawberry growers have finished harvesting their largest crop. The barreling plant received 832 barrels, each weighing 500 pounds, or a total of 208 tons of fruit.

The barrels were taken to Burlington to be placed in cold storage. In addition, about thirty-three tons of berries were marketed in crates for immediate consumption, making 241 tons of this fruit grown on the Island. The principal growers were: Glen Rodenberger, Oscar Carlson, Beryl Hall, Fred Banner, Harold Boyer, Billy Moore, Culver Willis, and H. Leatherwood.

About 200 persons were employed in the berry harvest which lasted six weeks. Weeding the young plants now has started. Mr. Rodenberger alone having thirty persons in this work, on 25 acres of young plants.

1/22/1942---ORCAS BOYS ENLIST IN U.S. MARINES

The Journal is informed that Maurice G. Rodenberger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Glen Rodenberger; and Edwin Feri, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Feri, both of Olga, have enlisted in the U.S. Marines and have been sent to San Diego for training.

7/2/1942---The Journal lists over 120 San Juan County men in the armed services.

2/4/1943---BELIEVES MIGRATION WORSE THAN DRAFT

Migration of farm people to war industries is a far more serious cause of manpower shortage on the farm than the drafting of farm boys. Dr. Carl F. Reuss, rural sociologist, told staff members at the annual agricultural experiment station conference in session last week.

Complete surveys indicate that less than one-third of the farm manpower loss is due to selective service, Reuss said.

Migration of farm youths to cities has been typical of American history, Reuss pointed out, but the current movement is far more serious because the families are smaller than they were a generation ago and migration takes young people in the prime of their productive life. Farms are left to carry on with abnormally high proportions of workers past 45 or under 18 years of age. Neither of these groups are as productive as workers in the 18-45 group.

Dr. Reuss discussed the points presented by Manpower Commissioner Paul V. McNutt as a policy for meeting the farm manpower problem and suggested that individual communities must plan to meet their own manpower needs before calling on outside sources.

1/14/1943---excerpt from the OLGA news

Some of the Indians who have been working for Glen Rodenberger left Sunday for a short visit at their homes on Vancouver Island.

4/8/1943---excerpt from the OLGA news

The Rodenbergers began digging and trimming strawberry plants on Monday. Owing to the small acreage the work will not last long.