

Excerpt from transcription of oral history on file at Orcas Island Historical Museum.

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We raised strawberries. We had 110 acres on this Island at one time.

We raised strawberries for the plants. We had the certified strawberry plants. The Doak place over here, where they are building the houses, you know? Well, that was all into strawberries, and we used to go to work in February and they used to dig the plants.

The building down here on the corner, you know?

The barreling plant, we used to call it. That was ours. The men would dig the plants and they'd grow.....

The girls used to take the leaves, you know, the roots off of them.....and tie them in fifty plants to a bundle. Used to tie them up and pack them in a thousand in a box. And Glen and the boys used to haul them down to Oregon and, oh, lots of places.

Yes, Glen, my husband, and George and all of them. They used to take turns taking them down, and we sold them there.

So they could be transplanted, yes. There was quite a lot of berry growers. We had Marshalls, they were the best eating strawberries there were. But you can't get them now. They're so diseased, you know, they just left them grow. And then when we got that done, then of course there were rows of strawberries about like this, you know. (Indicates half-dollar sized fruit)

.....then they was all cleaned up and cultivated and everything.

.....we used to have berries sometimes the first of June.....Then we would have the pickers come. We had a big building up here, that they used to have lots of tables and stoves in. That's where they used to cook their food. Then they had tents to sleep in.

It went along all right there for awhile. We used to get the young people—oh, you know, kids—coming over from Bellingham. We would put an ad in the paper and they'd come. And they just enjoyed themselves. Oh, some of them came over to really make money, but the rest had a good time. Then at

last the Canadian government let us have the Indians come down. It was really fine. They'd come early, and they didn't require so much, you know, attention. They brought their tents and put them wherever they wanted to. They had all their family, that's what they came for. We'd go over there seven o'clock in the morning.

We had the Moultry Place.....We had that all into strawberries, that place. I couldn't tell you how many Indians came over, but one of the men would go out and watch, you know. If they had any complaints, why he was the one that brought them to us.

Interviewer: Was he an Indian?

Oh, yes, Jonny Sam. He was a really fine fellow. They all were, real nice. We had a real good time with the Indians. They were up, working, seven o'clock in the morning, children and all. And they really picked the berries nicely and clean.

Then, down there at the cannery, why we had the barreling plant. We picked and hauled them like they do now. They'd have fifty gallon barrels of strawberries. We had machinery in there, you know, for washing and everything. The ladies, the women worked on the belt then.
.....we had a big truck—and Glen would take them down to the American Ice [company] in Everett. Then we had other—I think ten gallon, maybe—cans for the confectionary stores, for their ice cream.

It was a good business, give people something to do, lots of work on the Island. We had a group of growers. We called it the berry growers Association.

We was in the strawberry business until the....World War and then the Canadian government said "No," they couldn't let their people come over. So that settled it. Then we went out of the strawberry business, and I thought that we would starve, but we didn't! We got something else.

Interviewer: these Indians.....were they any special kind or tribe?

I think they were called the West Coast Indians. They lived up on the west coast of Vancouver Island.