

## 100 YEARS AT THE WOODHEAD FARM

It was a “close encounter” with a cougar near Hedley, BC that prompted Englishman Willis Woodhead to move his small family to Texada Island where there were no predators. In 1914 he purchased 85 acres on Crescent Bay from Norman Stones for \$4800. So began 100 years of continuous market gardening at the Woodhead family farm.

Fruit trees (apples, plums, pears) shipped from Renton, Washington were carried home from Blubber Bay. The space between the trees was planted with strawberries, potatoes and cabbages. Produce was packed on foot 3 miles to Blubber Bay to the large mining community and for shipping to Vancouver for sale (Woodward’s). Some in power were not pleased when the Woodhead farm supplied food to striking miners (including the Chinese workers) in the 1930’s.

The Woodheads raised chickens, pigs and a few cattle. Their first cow arrived unexpectedly at Blubber Bay wharf while Willis was in Hedley, leaving wife Alice and son Kirby, 7, to walk it home - a challenge for a city girl who knew nothing about livestock!

Willis was proud of his garden, especially his tomatoes whose variety he kept a secret. He would become angry if anyone entered the garden in his absence, even barring Alice on occasion.

Their children (Kirby, Catherine, Cecil and Phillip) all helped operate the farm as did the next generation whose labour was also “expected” by Grandfather. Their daily trek to school in Blubber Bay was often burdened by pounds of farm produce for delivery in town.

When Willis died in 1961 Phillip and wife, Frieda, took over. They raised 48 head of cattle (in “open range” around the area), milk cows, chickens and pigs (which frequently escaped). Most products were sold locally.

In 1992 Keith and Nora Hughes (Cecil’s daughter) renewed the farm. By then only one cow remained - a Hereford cross named L’Amie - which became the grand dam of all their future beef cattle.

Over the years the Hughes family (currently son Brad and wife Dawn) has raised turkeys and chickens, revived the heritage orchard, planted blueberries, raspberries and nuts and has grown a wide variety of vegetables without chemical feeds, fertilizers or insecticides.

When you see Brad and Dawn at the weekend farmers’ markets be sure to wish them a Happy 100th Anniversary!



Peter Lock

Texada Island Heritage Society