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Gehlbach J., The origins of quarrying for sandstone on Gabriola, *SHALE* 19, pp.3–10, Nov. 2008

Gehlbach J., Gabriola's dimension-stone quarry, *SHALE* 19, pp.11–24, Nov. 2008

Gehlbach J., Gabriola's millstone quarry, *SHALE* 19, pp.25–41, Nov. 2008

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Gabriolans and the sandstone quarries

—the Canessa, Hoggan, Manly, Easthom, and Coats families

by Jenni Gehlbach

Gabriola's sandstone quarry story¹ links BC's mining and quarrying companies to the lives and land of several early settlers: John Canessa, Alexander Hoggan, Mike Manly, the Easthom family, and Bill Coats.²

Land was pre-empted on Gabriola throughout the 1870s and '80s and many who came to the area had first arrived to work in Nanaimo's coalmines. Gabriola pre-emptions gave way to land purchase, and by the early twentieth century, former miners were farming, logging, fishing, or involved with the provision of services to the rapidly expanding population.

Pre-emption certificates and the Alberni-Nanaimo District's assessment rolls³ of 1884–5 tell us who owned the land near Descanso Bay including the quarry site. In those days, Descanso Bay was known as "Rocky Bay".

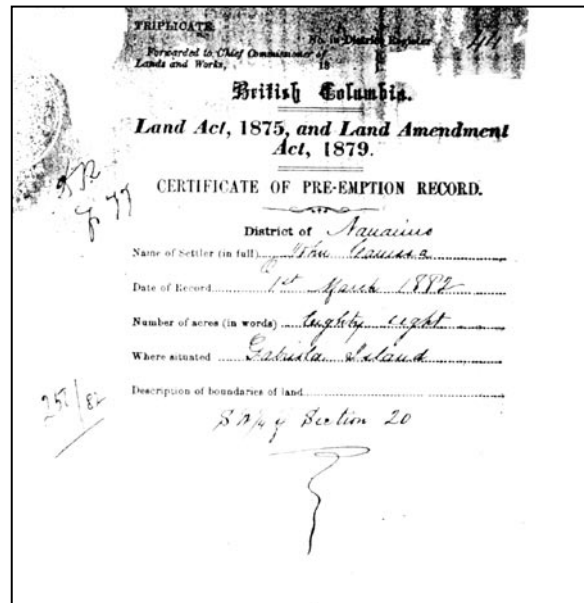
John Canessa & family

John Canessa pre-empted the land on which the quarry was later developed.

Captain John Canessa was born in Leghorn, Italy—his granddaughter-in-law Millie

(Mildred) Canessa⁴ says that he was born in 1838. He sailed his schooner to Fort Victoria, where he traded furs with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and fished.

In Victoria, he met and married Nora Griffin whose father Thomas J. Griffin had sailed at the age of 17 from England as an apprentice on the Brig, *Mary Dare*, to work for the HBC. Millie says that Nora was a "native



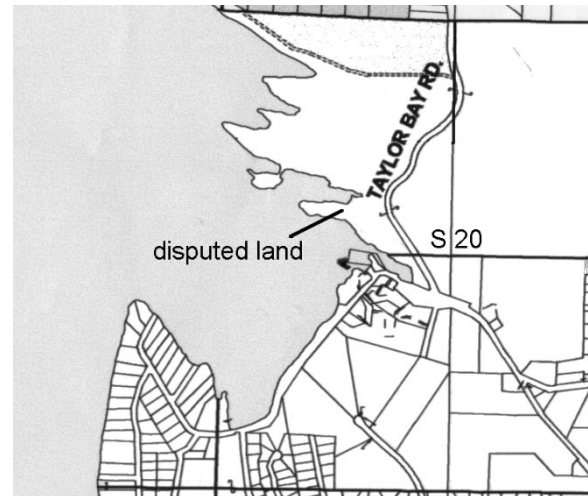
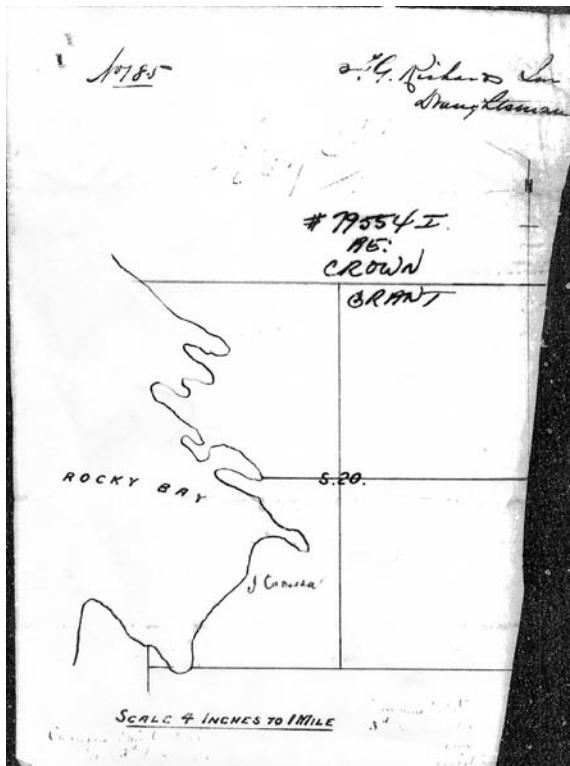
John Canessa's pre-emption record, 1882.

¹ *SHALE* 19 Special Issue, November 2008.

² Magnus Edgar, born in the Shetlands in 1826, and possibly Gabriola's first settler from Europe, worked at the coalmines in the early years (1853–4) though, along with others from Fort Victoria, he had no mining skills. I have nothing to link him with sandstone quarrying, but we can't be sure that such a handyman wasn't occasionally involved.

³ Nanaimo Community Archives.

⁴ Mildred Canessa (née Rogers) is a member of Vancouver Pioneers' Association and very proud of the Canessa family's heritage as pioneers in BC, which is recorded in the 2007 Anthology published by the Vancouver Pioneers' Association. She says that a bust of John Canessa is being carved by relatives of John's wife Nora, and she hopes to have it officially displayed in Vancouver. Mildred now lives in Langley, as does her son Dennis G. Canessa and his family. Her daughter, Donna L. Weiss, lives with her.



Left: The 1885 survey map attached to John Canessa's pre-emption record left it unclear as to whether the narrow peninsular on the north side of the present-day ferry terminal belonged to the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20 (Canessa's land) or the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ (Hoggan's land).

Right: The present-day legal base map of the Regional District of Nanaimo shows it lies without doubt in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20, as was determined in a 1914 survey.

daughter" whose mother came from Fort Kamloops. She was born in 1850. John and Nora's first daughter, Josephine, was born in 1870 in Olympia WA, and Filomena (Minnie) was born in 1874 in the San Juan Islands, just after the location of the border there between British Columbia and the US was finally settled.

The family travelled north to Nanaimo and family tradition says that their third daughter, Caroline, was the first baby born on Newcastle Island, in 1876. John Junior was born in Nanaimo in 1879, and Frank Americo in 1880. "Ferucio Canessa" was born in 1885, but no other records exist for him, so he most probably died as an infant.

While he lived in Nanaimo, on March 1, 1882, John Canessa pre-empted Gabriola land that encompassed all of Rocky Bay (now Descanso Bay) including the area where the sandstone quarry later operated. The land was described as "88 acres of land in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20 of Gabriola". The Crown Grant was issued to Canessa on May 3, 1884, after he declared improvements worth \$325, comprising three acres of cleared land for orchards, three "dwelling houses", a wharf, and a shed.

The Canessa-Hoggan dispute

Soon after his pre-emption, a dispute arose between him and Alexander Hoggan, his neighbour to the north. It was a fractious

mix of neighbourly misunderstanding and inaccurate surveying.

Canessa had built some “fishing huts”, with Hoggan’s apparent acquiescence at first, on what Hoggan claimed to be his rocky point of land. Hoggan tried to reclaim the land when Canessa erected more buildings. He gave notice for Canessa to remove the buildings, and when he didn’t, Hoggan seized them and rented them out. But Canessa thought the land was his. A notice appeared in the *Nanaimo Free Press* on November 8, 1884, warning that Canessa would prosecute “any person trespassing or building on my property known as Section 20, Rocky Bay, Gabriola Island”.

Canessa did eventually sue Hoggan for trespass, demanding the payment of damages. On March 3, 1886, the *Nanaimo Free Press* reported:

The trouble is that the plaintiff [Canessa] claims a point of land in Rocky Bay, Gabriola Island, which point he claims to be clearly defined on the tracing attached to his Crown Grant. The defendant, [Hoggan] on the other hand, claims that the survey shows that the point in question belongs to him. The decision was adjourned...to... make a survey of the point in dispute and make a report to the court.

On March 17, 1886, the paper reported that Canessa was claiming \$220 damages but that the new survey clearly showed that the original one was not accurate:

...not only the point with its five acres of bare rock, but also the much more extensive fertile ground at the back of it, have from the first survey belonged to Alexander Hoggan, and to that I declare him entitled. At the same time, according to the well-known rule of law, that if I see and allow an innocent man to build on my ground and do not at once warn him of it, I make myself liable for the expenditure I allow him to incur....

The Court suggested a compromise, setting the judgement and costs against “a conveyance from Hoggan to John Canessa of the five rocky acres of which the point consists” to be paid by Canessa, who could then retain ownership of the rocky point and houses. Hoggan appealed this judgement, but the original judgement was upheld in Nanaimo County Court on June 20, 1888. The next day Hoggan asked for a new trial but this was refused and his family for many years talked of their “stolen” land.

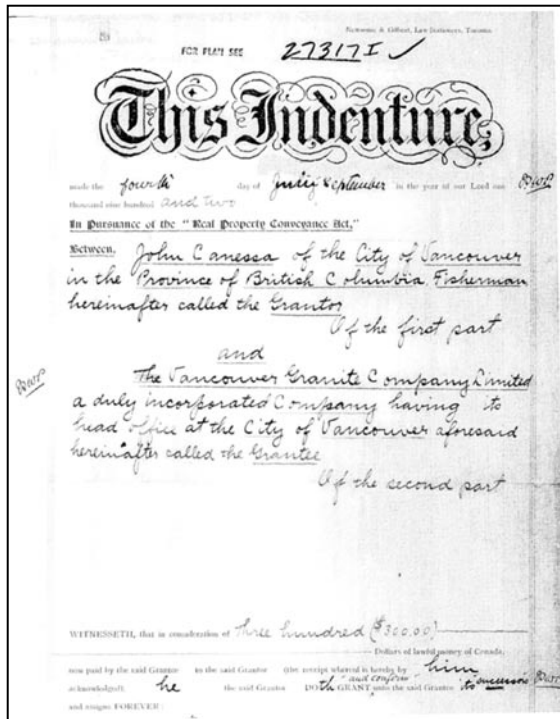
Canessa and the quarry

In 1886, Canessa sold about 19½ acres in the southwest corner of his land to his other neighbour, Mike Manly. This abutted Manly’s Section 25 holdings and included the shoreline area on the west of Rocky Bay. The transaction neatly completed a block of land for Manly, but maybe was necessary simply because Canessa was short of cash. Canessa hadn’t paid his 1885 property taxes and on January 8, 1887, The *Nanaimo Free Press* printed an official notice posted by tax assessor and collector, Mark Bate, the same man who became the city’s first mayor.

SALE OF LAND FOR TAXES

Taxes remaining unpaid in Nanaimo District on account of assessment made in 1885; tax collectable on and after the 2nd January, 1886: J. Canessa, real property, section 20, S.W. ¼, 88 acres, Gabriola Island, \$1.50...The above sale will take place on Monday, the 11th day of February, 1887... M. BATE, Assessor & Collector, Nanaimo, B.C., Dec. 30th, 1886.

Presumably this tax bill was paid in time, because Canessa continued to hold the land for the next few years. Strangely, on August 1, 1891, another notice appeared in the *Nanaimo Free Press*, this time posted by Canessa himself:



Canessa's sale of the land to the Vancouver Granite Company, 1902.

FOR SALE: The Southwest Quarter of Section 20, Gabriola Island, containing about 83 acres is offered for sale.

JOHN CANESSA, Europe Hotel, Vancouver.

But the land did not sell then either, and within a few years, sandstone was being quarried there. Canessa held the land until 1902, when Vancouver Granite Company bought it from him. We have no information about any leasing arrangements he may have had with quarrying companies during the 1890s, though there was certainly quarrying on his land during that period.

The subsequent Canessa family history

The family does not seem to have ever lived on Gabriola and there is no further mention of John Canessa in Nanaimo or on Gabriola after 1902. Millie Canessa said that that it has been hard to trace John Canessa's

path—he was often on the move, but she writes:

On the morning of June 13, 1886, Captain John Canessa Sr. left Nanaimo, BC for Vancouver. He sailed his small boat into English Bay, and witnessed the Great Fire⁵ that destroyed Gastown, as Vancouver was then known. Captain Canessa joined the citizens, helping to fight the fire. Lives were lost and many people were injured.

Some of John Canessa's descendants did stay in Nanaimo though. In 1888, his oldest daughter Josephine married James Harper⁶ (born in BC of English parents) who was described as a "general dealer" in the 1891 census but a postmaster in 1901. They lived with James' widowed father Joseph Harper, an ordinary seaman who became a hotelkeeper. Josephine and James had four children (Joe, born in 1889, May Josephine, 1893, Christopher, 1895 and Muriel, 1899). Josephine died in Nanaimo in 1958 at 87.

The rest of the Canessa family lived on the BC mainland. In November 1888, Canessa bought a small island outside Eagle Harbour in West Vancouver—reportedly for only \$70. It was locally called Canessa Island or Canessa Place, but the family lived there only briefly before settling in Vancouver.

⁵ The Great Fire destroyed most of the newly incorporated City of Vancouver. The fire began as a brush fire to clear land but was spread out of control by a strong gale. Dozens of lives were lost and the only structures not destroyed were a stone building in the West End and a few structures on the banks of False Creek. Within four days, new buildings appeared—maybe this helped spur the demand for building stone.

⁶ In the Vancouver Pioneers' Association Anthology Millie has written incorrectly that Josephine married Joe Harper. All census records indicate that Joseph (Joe) Harper was a widower and the grandfather of Josephine's children, not the father. The same records list Joe's married son James living in the same household and marriage records say that James Harper married a Josephine "Canapa" in 1888.

Nora died in 1890 and John Canessa died in 1906. They are both buried in Vancouver's Mountain View Cemetery.

John and Nora's youngest daughter, Filomena, married Luis Vincenzi and they had three sons (Louis, Albert, and William). They had property at 25th and Fraser in Vancouver.

Caroline ("Nonnie"), of Newcastle Island, married August Balatti in 1894, and they had three sons (Victor, John, and Louis) and two daughters (Gertrude and Nora). They lived mainly in the lower mainland.

However, Caroline in her later years lived with her daughter in Kamloops, where she died at 94 in 1972.

John Jr. ("Young John"), my informant Millie's father-in-law, married Gertrude Alice Padgham in 1902 and lived in Vancouver all his life. They had two sons, Byron and Hogel ("Jack"), and a daughter, Rosabel. John Jr. died at 91 in 1970. Captain Frank Americo Canessa, John Jr.'s brother, married Bessie Childs and they had a daughter Zelma. Frank died in 1940.

John Jr. also became "Captain" John Canessa, skippering tugboats. To nicely round out our story, in 1902, the year John Canessa Sr. sold his Gabriola land to Vancouver Granite Company, John Jr. worked for Armstrong and Morrison, the bridge-building company that controlled the quarrying company. He was mate on the tugboat *Dorothy* during the construction of the first Fraser River Bridge at New Westminster and showed great skill manoeuvring the swirling current when the skipper was taken ill. In 1923, he saved the lives of "sand-hogs" working underwater on the piers of Second Narrows Bridge by quickly grabbing and bravely hanging on to an air hose that had snapped, injuring himself in the process. John Canessa Jr. also worked on numerous other lower mainland

bridge projects as well as at the Victoria Government Drydock.

Alexander Hoggan & family

Alexander Hoggan, a one-time coal miner, is the earliest person from Gabriola known to have worked in a local sandstone quarry, albeit, on Newcastle Island before the Gabriola quarry went into operation.

After his first wife died of tuberculosis in Dumferlin, Scotland, Alexander Hoggan left his four children with his mother Janet (or "Jennet") and emigrated in 1860 to work in the Nova Scotia coalmines. The following year, he married his landlady's daughter, Mary Elizabeth Bradbury, who would have been willing to care for his children, but they had in the meantime all died.⁷

Alexander's brothers, David and William, left Scotland in 1861 to seek their fortunes in San Francisco. Intending to follow the gold trail north to the Cariboo, they settled instead in Nanaimo, where they established themselves as merchants. David became the town's butcher, famous for his Scottish sausages, and William opened a grocery store in his house.

On a canoe trip to Gabriola, the bachelor brothers spotted a waterfall on a bluff, draining a lake, and decided to pre-empt the land near what became Hoggan Lake. They blasted the outlet to lower the lake's level and create more farmable land, and sent for their mother, who arrived with her plant clippings in 1871 after journeying around Cape Horn. Unsure what the New World held, she had even brought with her a box of

⁷ This information is taken from the family history written in 1990 by Alexander Hoggan's granddaughter, Hillma Holm Lenshaw, which has many more fascinating details about the Hoggan family before and after the period of Gabriola's quarry. Two other brothers, George and Walter, emigrated to the US.



Alexander and Mary Elizabeth Hoggan

Hazel Windecker

salt. In her seventies, but vigorous and tough, she had come to help farm the property.

Alexander and his family—by now he and Mary Elizabeth had six children—joined his brothers and mother in BC in 1873, arriving for a grand family reunion in time for Christmas. Their journey from Nova Scotia across country and up the coast had been gruelling and included an attempted abduction of their infant daughter by a lonely woman they met on the train, and a long delay waiting for a northbound ship in San Francisco.

The family worked hard and had considerable success. On May 9, 1874, *The Nanaimo Free Press* wrote about Gabriola:

Of the settlers, the older ones of course have done most work, [such] as the Messrs. Hoggan, whose dwelling house, garden, barn and buildings are a model of neatness, comfort and good workmanship. They are on the borders of a lake which they have lowered considerably.

The Hoggan Lake farm provided produce and meat for the brothers' Nanaimo store.⁸ On July 15 that year, the same paper reported:

Several farmers of Nanaimo & District have formed...a club for the purpose of disposing of their rapidly increasing stock. They will to-day open a new butcher shop on Commercial Street...under the management of Mr. David Hoggan of Gabriola Island.

The newspaper also reported that the Hoggan brothers had bought out the Farmers'

Market in 1875, and that in

1881, David was selling beef, mutton, veal, and spiced beef and pork sausages there. In 1885, they sold the Farmer's Market to E. Hodgson.

Meanwhile, Alexander worked briefly at the sandstone quarry on Newcastle Island while it was shipping stone for the building of the United States Branch Mint in San Francisco. He then moved his family to a mining company house while he worked as a foreman at the Wellington coalmine with his sons, John and James. Working conditions were rough there and Lynda Poulton has reported:⁹

Alexander and other men were troubled by the working conditions, and discussed strike action. Declaring Hoggan a ringleader, Dunsmuir had the sheriff remove his wife

⁸ After 15 years at the lake, Janet went to live in Nanaimo near her sons' store. A relative of Alexander's first wife came out to live at the Hoggan Lake farm with her children in 1888, but she became discouraged and returned to Scotland after the log house burned down. Hillma Rose Holm Lenshaw

⁹ Lynda Poulton, *Gabriola's coal-mining connections*, *SHALE* 16, pp.23–4, July 2007.

and children from their company-owned home.

At the Victoria Assizes in mid-May, 1877, the men were charged with “unlawfully and without legal authority compelling diverse persons...from lawfully performing their work...”. Only Alexander was found guilty, and he was sentenced to four months imprisonment but, on the jury’s recommendation, without hard labour,¹⁰ although the family recalls that Alexander actually spent far longer than four months in jail, and that young David was only a baby when the family was put out into the snow.

The bad blood between the Hoggans and the mine-owning Dunsmuirs persisted. Mining was a tough life and Alexander aspired to owning his own land like his brothers. His granddaughter Hillma Holm Lenshaw writes:

While still working in the mines...with John and James, Alexander bought the North Gabriola property on what was known as Hoggan’s Bay next to the ferry-landing bay. All of them went over on weekends and cultivated the fields and planted trees and berry bushes. ... After a small house was built they all moved over to live on the farm, with the men still working in the mine and going across the water in dugout canoes....

The land they settled first became known as Hoggan Bay, but the family called it Paradise Bay. Later in its history, it was also referred to as Cox’s Bay, and then Peacock’s Bay. By the time of the 1881 census, Alexander and Mary Elizabeth (then 40) had nine children: baby William, Robert (3), David (5)—these three born in BC—and Sarah (6), Elizabeth (7), Janet (9), Mary (11), James (15), and John (17), all born in Nova Scotia. James was listed as a farm labourer and John as a miner. During the

1880s, Alexander pre-empted other tracts of Gabriola land and the family’s weekend cultivation began to pay off. On September 26, 1885, the *Nanaimo Free Press* reported that Mrs. Hoggan had raised “mammoth peaches”.

In this period, John fell in with bad company, stole his Dad’s boat and absconded to gamble in the US, but drowned in the Columbia River on the way. Then, on May 3, 1887, young James was among the 148 miners killed in the terrible explosion at the Number One (Esplanade) mine.

Alexander never went back to the mines and the family had to survive on their land without the older boys to help. But they managed by hard work—the Nanaimo newspaper reported on December 13, 1889, that Mary Elizabeth had taken four crops of vegetables to town.¹¹

Calamity struck the family again in 1891. Frank Bond reports that:¹²

...their married and pregnant daughter, Janet, died at the age of twenty from scarlet fever. The whole family suffered from the disease, which isolated them from the community, and kept them from harvesting their crops.

That same year, old Janet Hoggan died at 89, and the Nanaimo newspaper reported that William Hoggan closed his small store near the Millstone Bridge because it was losing money.

Both William (55) and David (53) are listed as miners in the 1891 census while Alexander is described as a 61-year-old farmer. By then, two more daughters had been born to Alexander: Christina (5) and “Marsha A.” (7), though the family always refers to her as Martha.

¹⁰ Lynne Bowen, *Three Dollar Dreams*, p.174, Oolichan Books, 1987.

¹¹ See *Home Groan*, *SHALE* 16, pp.27–8, 2007.

¹² Gabriola Sounder, August 11, 1995.

The family says that Alexander died in 1902, but in the 1901 census the only listed Hoggan was Alexander's 65-year-old brother, William, who was again running a general store in Nanaimo.

Alexander's son, William, learned to be a grocer, first working at his Uncle William's store in 1898, and fully taking it over in 1908. In 1914, the year his own son was born, he built the store anew, achieving "one of the most modern and best equipped business houses in Nanaimo". It was described in the *Nanaimo Free Press* as a two-storey brick building on a concrete foundation at 410 Stewart Avenue, and "the only store in the Newcastle Townsite". It cost \$15,000. He eventually sold the store out of the family in 1926, two years before he died aged 47.

There are no Hoggans living on Gabriola anymore. David Hoggan remained a bachelor and logged on Gabriola until the war when he became an infantryman and was killed on May 6, 1917, in the Battle of Vimy Ridge.¹³ Robert lived on Gabriola and married late (to the schoolteacher), and they had no children. Alexander's daughter Elizabeth married John Cox and lived on the south end of Mudge Island—Hazel Windecker, who gave me much of this information about the Hoggan family, is Elizabeth's granddaughter. Four other Hoggan daughters married and moved away from the island.

Martha, their tenth child, married the Swedish blacksmith, John Holm, who worked at the quarry. Their daughter Mary was born in 1901, and Hillma Holm Lenshaw, the family historian, was born in 1903. Their son Ernest was born in 1905.

¹³ The family records say at Verdun in France, but this seems unlikely as that was a battle between the French and German armies.

Talking to June Harrison about his family's farm, Ernest said:¹⁴

The farm was located up the hill from the ferry...and right up to that road, and back some way towards Cox's. Then, above there again we owned another farm. ...We always had plenty of water on our place, and when the quarry was working they took a lot of water from our farm.

Mike Manly

Mike Manly was a neighbour of John Canessa and bought some of his land.

Mike Manly (or Manley in some records) was born in Ireland and had come to Canada in 1871. Census records also tell us he was a Roman Catholic and had no family, but his exact age and date of birth are a bit of a mystery. In the 1881 census, he is described as 36 years old (that is he was born *circa* 1845), but in the 1891 census he is said to be 52 (that is he was born *circa* 1839), and in the 1901 census, he is 70 years old and born in 1830.

In a file relating to the estate of Henry Goss in 1882–3, Manly is described as an engineman, though he became a Gabriola farmer on his pre-empted and purchased land.

Mike was a colourful character and small—he had difficulty mounting his horse, especially when drunk, and he was teased unmercifully by his friends. We have no photograph of him, but we can glimpse him through the eyes of Frisco Jack [Easthom], Gilbert Easthom, and William Higgins.

Jack told June Harrison:¹⁵

Old Mike Manly...little bit of a fellow...and a little bunch of whiskers, big hands...Jeez,

¹⁴ June Lewis-Harrison, *The People of Gabriola*, p.80, 1982.

¹⁵ June Harrison, *The People...*, p.89.

he swore and hollered! You could hear him half a mile away. Manly came from Ireland...had a bit of land too...Gib [Gilbert Easthom] and I used to go down when Bill [William Higgins] came across the road and tell us, 'Mike's got the snakes [shakes?]' again', the DTs....

By the early 1880s, Manly had pre-empted land in Sections 25 (adjacent to Canessa's holdings), 27, and 12. His neighbour Henry Goss held "140 acres more or less" of land in Sections 12 and 26 between Manly's pre-emptions, but after Goss died intestate in 1875, Manly made a \$500 deal with the Administrator of the estate, John Caulfield, to buy Goss's lands and improvements.

The deal proved complicated because Caulfield also died before all the paperwork was complete, but eventually, after Manly paid a further \$167.46 (\$7.46 of this was interest) to the Provincial Government in 1883, the titles were officially conveyed. Manly's extensive swathe of land now incorporated much of the Descanso Valley area and the cliff top area overlooking Northumberland Channel. To complete his holdings, in 1886, Manly also acquired the small parcel of land in the southwest corner of Canessa's Rocky Bay pre-emption.

Since he had no family, as he got older he needed help farming his land and June Harrison reports that the three Easthom brothers worked with him.¹⁶ When he died in 1904, the Easthom family acquired some of his land near Rocky (Descanso) Bay and Manly was buried on his acreage overlooking the water.

The Easthom family

Two generations of quarriers.

John ("Bunky") Easthom and his wife Martha (née Hayes) brought their family to

BC in the mid-1870s. They had emigrated from northern England to Iowa, and from there they travelled west, and up into Canada. Their oldest child, Henry (Harry) had been born in England. Isabella (Bella), Richard (Dick), and James were born in the US. Young John was born in BC in 1878.

In 1879, Bunky Easthom pre-empted 160 acres near where North Road, Bertha Avenue, and Tansy Drive intersect.¹⁷ Needing an income for their large family, like most immigrants to the Nanaimo area, Bunky worked in the coalmines. He continued working there when he first lived on Gabriola, rowing over to Newcastle Island. Bunky drowned in a tragic accident in shallow water in Rocky Bay in 1880, leaving Martha pregnant. The 1881 census lists 35-year-old Martha as a widowed farmer with five children living at home: Harry (17), Bella (10), Dick (7), James (5), John (3), and baby Ann.

In 1883 (4?), Martha had a son, Gilbert (Gib), and married Arnold Higham.¹⁸ The family built a house and cleared the requisite ten acres of land—improvements declared to be worth \$600, which gave Martha full ownership of the land that had been pre-empted in 1885. Their busy life and farming continued until Higham died in 1897. By the time of the 1901 census, Martha was living with her youngest sons John (22) and Gilbert (17), and her grandchildren, Harry and Elizabeth Easthom's children, Nellie (14) and John H. Easthom (12), who became the legendary "Frisco Jack".¹⁹

¹⁷ This pre-emption was the SE ¼ of Section 19.

¹⁸ The marriage certificate wrongly calls him "Arnver" Higham. His surname is sometimes spelled "Hyam" in other documents. In the 1891 census, Higham was reported as 56 years old and oddly both he and Martha are described as Anglican—in the earlier census, married to Bunky, she was Methodist.

¹⁹ June Harrison, *The People...*, p.84.

¹⁶ June Harrison, *The People...*, pp.83, 156.



Earl Easthom in the millstone quarry. On the right, he is attaching a grapple to lift a millstone core.

Sheila Bradley

Dick's granddaughter, Sheila Bradley, confirms that her family acquired land near Descanso Bay from Mike Manly in the early 1900s and eventually sold their pre-empted land. As adults, Martha's sons, Gib, John, and Dick, stayed on Gabriola and, like many islanders, did a variety of work: farming, logging, quarrying, and mining. Many Easthom descendants still live on Gabriola, among them of course Dick's son Earl, who worked at the millstone quarry.

Bill Coats

Owner of the pulpstone quarry site.



William Harvey Coats, shown with his son Clyde on the front cover, was only twenty-years old when he came to Gabriola in 1912, but before settling here, he worked at Nanaimo's Jingle Pot coalmine. Before emigrating, he had also mined in Hamilton, Scotland. His son, Clyde, told me that Bill was always a very hard worker.

At first, he got permission "from a South African guy" who owned property located roughly between today's Bond Street and Bluewater Road²⁰ to build and occupy a house without buying or even renting the land, just "on a handshake". There, Bill set up a sawmill to build a log house, and his brother Archie came out from the eastern US to help. Their parents, Thomas and Helen (née Harvey), came out from Scotland to join Bill and live in that house, but Archie went back to the US when it was finished.

²⁰ The NE ¼ of Section 18, in the Whalebone Beach area close to the entrance to Sandwell Park.

Clyde told me that the first land his father bought was in the low-lying moist area near today's Dogwood Crescent off South Road.²¹ That's where he grew his famous cauliflowers that became the base of his trading.²² Clyde told June Harrison:²³

...when...father came out here, he came from a country where a working man never had a chance to own land, and...like everyone else who came to Gabriola, he wanted to have his own land.... Soon after, Bill was able to buy his first land on the island and purchased eighty acres, where he built a barn and a home and tilled the land.

In 1925, Bill Coats married Florence Margaret Lavenne in Nanaimo, and in 1928 she and Bill held land at the top of the hill up from the ferry, where North and South roads diverge.²⁴ Clyde says his father told him that Florence died a few years later when a boat capsized during a trip down the US coast near the Columbia River, killing several passengers. They had no children.

June Harrison reports that around 1928, when the opportunity arose to buy the land near Descanso Bay, Bill went up north in his boat to work where they were surveying for the Kanaka Canal (near today's Kitimat),²⁵ though Clyde believes that Bill merely transported the surveying party.

In 1930, Bill bought Canessa's old land from the Vancouver Granite Company, leasing the quarry site the following year to J.A. and C.H. McDonald Company for pulpstone production after he'd convinced

them of the superiority of Gabriola's sandstone over that of Newcastle Island.

Coats built a house and general store near the wharf and another house nearby for his parents, where they lived until old Thomas Coats died in 1932 and Helen in 1937.

Bill married again in 1935, this time to Catherine Elmina Ashley who had first come to Gabriola in 1933. The land that Bill and Florence had held jointly was passed to Catherine in 1938.

Catherine worked for many years at the Coats store,²⁶ and both she and Bill were very industrious and active in the community all their lives. They had two children: Heather Hawthorne (now married and living in Vancouver) and Clyde Harvey, who still lives on Gabriola, as does his son, Mark.

Bill died in 1980 and Catherine in 1985, and in their memory, Clyde Coats named two streets near Gabriola Passage: Sir William Drive and Saint Catherine's Avenue.

Clyde Coats lives on the last land that Bill Coats bought, which was the land near Hoggan Lake pre-empted by William and David Hoggan. Bill never lived there himself. His grandson Mark and his family still farm the land there. Beyond the impressive pulpstone entrance and up the curving driveway past the fruit trees and farm animals, Clyde's house overlooks serene Hoggan Lake, which he cleaned out because it had become clogged and polluted with hunters' debris. He has leased land around it for the golf course, generates electricity from the waterfall to feed into the grid, and continues to manage his family's extensive land holdings on Gabriola. ♦

²¹ The west half of the NW ¼ of Section 13.

²² Cauliflowers require soil with a high sulphur content, which is usually lacking in wetlands on Gabriola. Bob at the Good Earth market garden says sweet onions (Walla Walla's) do well here as a result.

²³ June Harrison, *The People...*, pp.125, 130.

²⁴ The north half of the SE ¼ of Section 20.

²⁵ June Harrison, *The People...*, p.126.

²⁶ Hazel Windecker remembers working at the Coats store and Clyde told me she used to take care of him sometimes.