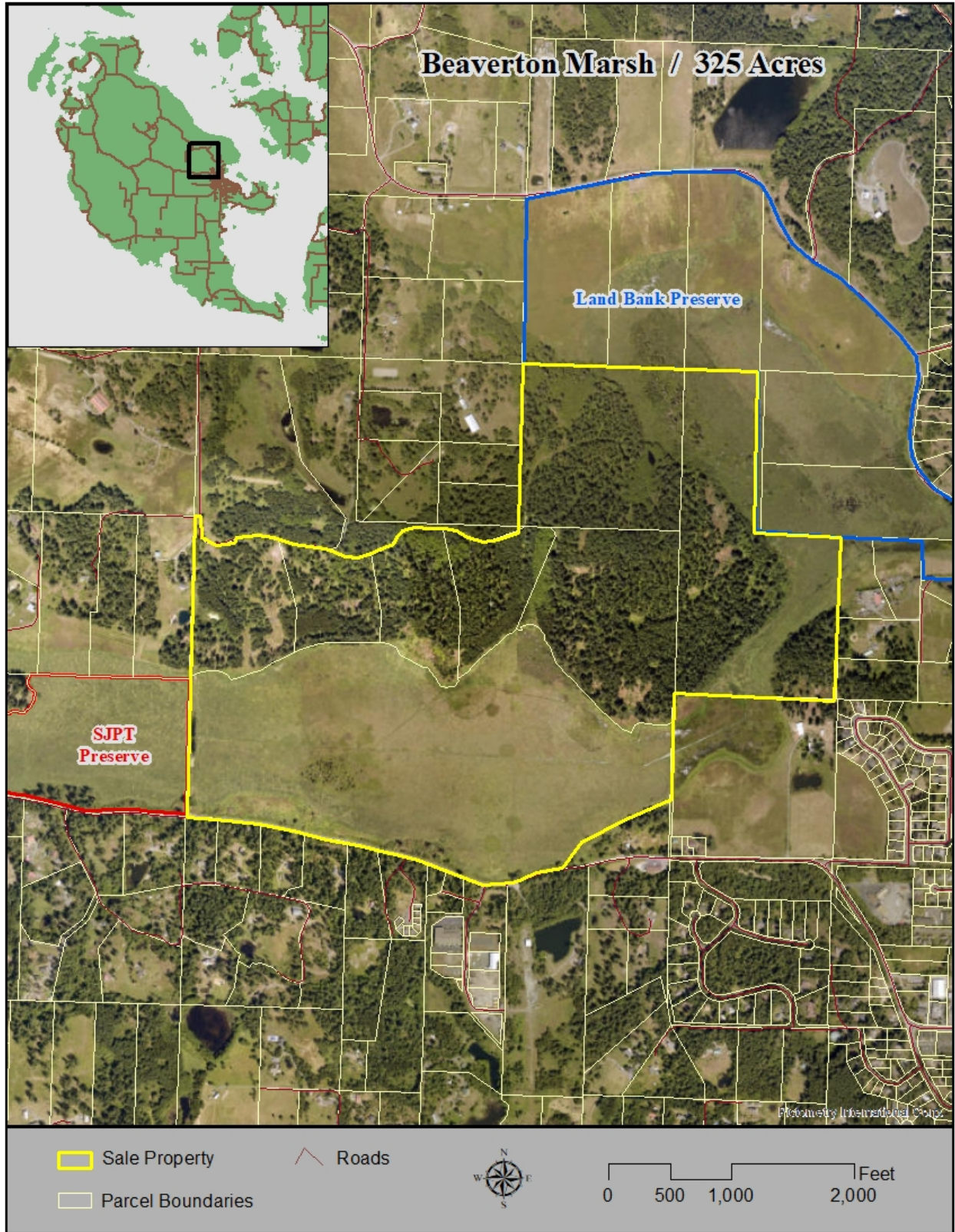


BEAVERTON VALLEY MARSH
Cultural History Study
The San Juan Preservation Trust

Summary

In May 2019, the San Juan Preservation Trust contracted with Boyd C. Pratt, Mulno Cove Creations, LLC, to research the cultural history of Beaverton Valley Marsh, San Juan Island, San Juan County, Washington. Findings associated with its historic settlement and use include:

- Early descriptions of San Juan Island do not mention Beaverton Valley specifically, nor do they indicate how and when it got its name. From later descriptions, however it is clear that there was a beaver dam in the lower end of the Valley that changed an existing forest to the present marsh and gave it its name.
- By the time of the 1874 Township and Range Survey, Beaverton Valley had been settled by several EuroAmericans. They had established farmsteads on the upper slopes of the Valley and fenced pastures and cultivated crops in the marsh.
- Acquisition of land through both Pre-emption and Homesteading occurred soon after the settlement of the boundary dispute (1872); several were by families had already claimed portions of the Valley as noted by the Township and Range surveyors. Typically, they built a one story, 1-2 room log house (usually around 12 by 24 feet) as well as a barn and other outbuildings (root house, granary, etc.), and dug a well. Fenced orchards and cultivated fields were established on the slopes above the marsh, while the bottomland itself was drained by means of ditches and used as pasture or planted in grain crops—usually oats.
- Access to the Valley has always been by two routes: on the south, originally separately, on the east from Friday Harbor and on the west from the south. A road from Friday Harbor ran along the northern section. By the 1890s, a road had been constructed along the southern edge of the marsh and to the north the road followed the contours along the northern edge of the marsh. In the 1930s a road ran through the marsh along a line that bisects the southwest quarter of Section 10.
- While ditching occurred as early as the 1870s, a Ditch District was not formally established until 1891. This was renewed as a Ditch Association in 1911. Attention to the maintenance and condition of the ditches varied throughout the twentieth century.
- Agricultural use of Beaverton Valley and the marsh itself has also varied over time, with cultivation of cereal crops and pasturage for dairy cows being the primary uses.
- There are three principal sites with historic structures: the “Old Delaney Place” to the north; the Girard Garden to the south; and structures of unknown attribution in the wooded section between the marshes.



Study Area Definition

The Beaverton Valley Marsh study area is approximately 500 acres, of which the actual marshland comprises approximately 240 acres, in Sections 2, 3, 9, 10, and 11 of Township 35 North, Range 3 West, San Juan Island, San Juan County, Washington. There are two principal sections of the Valley Marsh: a northern one that extends along the south side of Roche Harbor Road from Terrace Drive to the southeast to almost Halvorsen Road to the northwest, and a southern section to the north of Beaverton Valley Road from Larsen Street on the east to Barnswallow Lane to the west. The two sections join on their eastern, lower end and the overall waterflow is from the west to drainage under Roche Harbor Road near Terrace Drive to Salmon Creek (also known as Beaverton Creek). The San Juan County Land Bank owns the 135-acre Beaverton Marsh Preserve (acquired in 2001) on the northern section. The San Juan Preservation Trust acquired the 40-acre Beaverton Valley West Preserve, on the western edge of the southern section, in 2011. The Land Bank, assisted by the Preservation Trust, recently acquired a 325-acre property connecting these two preserves, which comprises most of the remaining portions of Beaverton Valley Marsh as well as the higher, forested land that separates the two sections.

History

Early Descriptions. It is not known what uses, if any, were made of Beaverton Valley Marsh by the Coast Salish occupants of the island. Early descriptions of San Juan Island, including the “Geographical Memoir” that the North West Boundary Survey produced after their reconnaissance of the islands, do not specifically discuss Beaverton Valley. General mention is made of the rich bottom lands occurring in several of the valleys on the island and Henry Custer commented about nearby “Oak Prairie” (San Juan Valley): “In the lower portion of Oak prairie, where in Winter ponds of water collect, and render the ground sufficiently moist during the Summer season, the soil is very rich and productive, its depth being from 2 ½ to 3 feet.” This description can be generally applied to Beaverton Valley.

While it has not been determined when the name “Beaverton Valley” originated, the marshy areas of the study area are clearly the result of beaver activity—as the name “Beaverton” (Beaver Town) implies. In the 1901 *Supplement to the San Juan Islander* under the section on “PAUL GUARD,” his farm is described as “...a most beautiful stretch of land, the great portion of which is beaver marsh land, the very best known.” Anglican Colonial Bishop George Hills described in his 1860 *Diary* a beaver dam on a lake about two and a half miles from English Camp (possible Egg or Sportsman’s Lake):

These animals build their houses in the water. To keep a sufficient depth they create, most ingeniously, a dam across the water. In this case they have raised a bank some ten feet high & 150 feet in length across the end of the lake where the water was included to be shallow & pass away. The beavers had cut down trees & brought them to the spot. They had cut lengths of three & four

feet to lay on the top & across the larger pieces. Then they had filled [it] in with caulk & mud. The result is a perfect bridge of about from three to four feet wide. I walked over it (Beyshaw 1996).

In the description of the survey of the ditch proposed in 1891 (see below), an “old beaver dam” is called out towards the end (lower) portion of the ditch line—in the approximate vicinity of modern day intersection of Roche Harbor Road and Terrace Drive. All of these references, as well as the general physical nature of the valley today, indicate that it was created in part through beaver activity. Due to intensive trapping by the Hudson Bay Company and its suppliers, beaver were locally extirpated by the 1870s.

George B. Rigg, in his 1953 study *Peat Resources of Washington*, describes what Beaverton Valley must have been like prior to drainage and cultivation:

A swamp forest formerly covered part of the area, and brush grew on part of it. The evidence for the swamp forest is the presence of old stumps in the banks of the drainage ditch and in the peat nearby, the presence of logs and pieces of rotten wood buried in the peat, and the presence of small particles of wood suspended in the peat slime. The evidence for the former existence of brushy areas is that some dense growths of brush are still in their native condition, and that brush quickly invades the neglected areas.

One of the specific areas he studied was a 5-acre garden bordering the road that runs along the south edge of the marsh in the SE¹/₄ of Section 10; this was being used by P. N. Girard at the time of the study:

The history of the 5-acre garden area furnishes additional evidence. Before it was cleared in 1927 or 1928 it was a jungle of alder and willow with some pine. Long before that it was a forest of large spruce and cedar trees, but beavers dammed the lower end of the marsh, and the trees were killed by flooding.

This leads to the overall conclusion that the Beaverton Valley Marsh was probably once forested and that it became a marsh as a result of beaver damming at the lower end of its drainage.

Township and Range Survey. The United States Land Ordinance of 1785, which was first applied in the old “Northwest” of Ohio in that year, established the rectangular cadastral survey system used for most of the public lands in the central and western United States after that time. In the Pacific Northwest, the principal Willamette Meridian, running north-south, and an east-west base line were established near the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers in Oregon. From these lines at six-mile intervals were established east-west township lines and north-south range lines. All of San Juan County fell west of the principal meridian and north of the base line; hence the townships designated by the intersections of these lines consisted of the description “Township *x* North and Range *y* West.” These townships, or squares of one mile on each side, were in turn subdivided into 36 sections of 640 acres each. These sections could then be subdivided into half sections of

320 acres, quarter sections of 160 acres, and so on. Because the principal lines ran north-south and east-west, subdivisions were designated as quarters of successively larger squares: for instance, the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 10 of Township 35 North Range 3 West (abbreviated as NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 10 T35N R3W).

Because ownership of the land, in the Euro-American sense, was tied up in the boundary dispute until 1872, it was not until 1874 that the islands were surveyed and divided into townships and sections. The General Land Office hired three surveyors—Reed, Sheets, and Whitworth, who began work in the autumn of 1874. Beaverton Valley was surveyed by J. M. Whitworth, U.S. Deputy Surveyor, on September 15th, 1874. Parts of the valley were described in his field notes as his team surveyed along the section lines; the most relevant are the north/south lines between sections 9 & 10 and 10 & 11, and the east/west lines between 3 & 10 and 2 & 11. The numbers indicate subdivisions of chains (a chain has 100 links of equal length for a total of 66 feet) measured from the corner; feet are indicated in parentheses; summaries occur at the end of each line:

North between 9 & 10: 24.50 [1,617] private wagon road; 25.00 [1,650] “Enter willow, hardhack, & wild tea swamp bearing E. & W.” *Summary:* “Swale land excellent quality” and “...in swale willow & hardhack.”

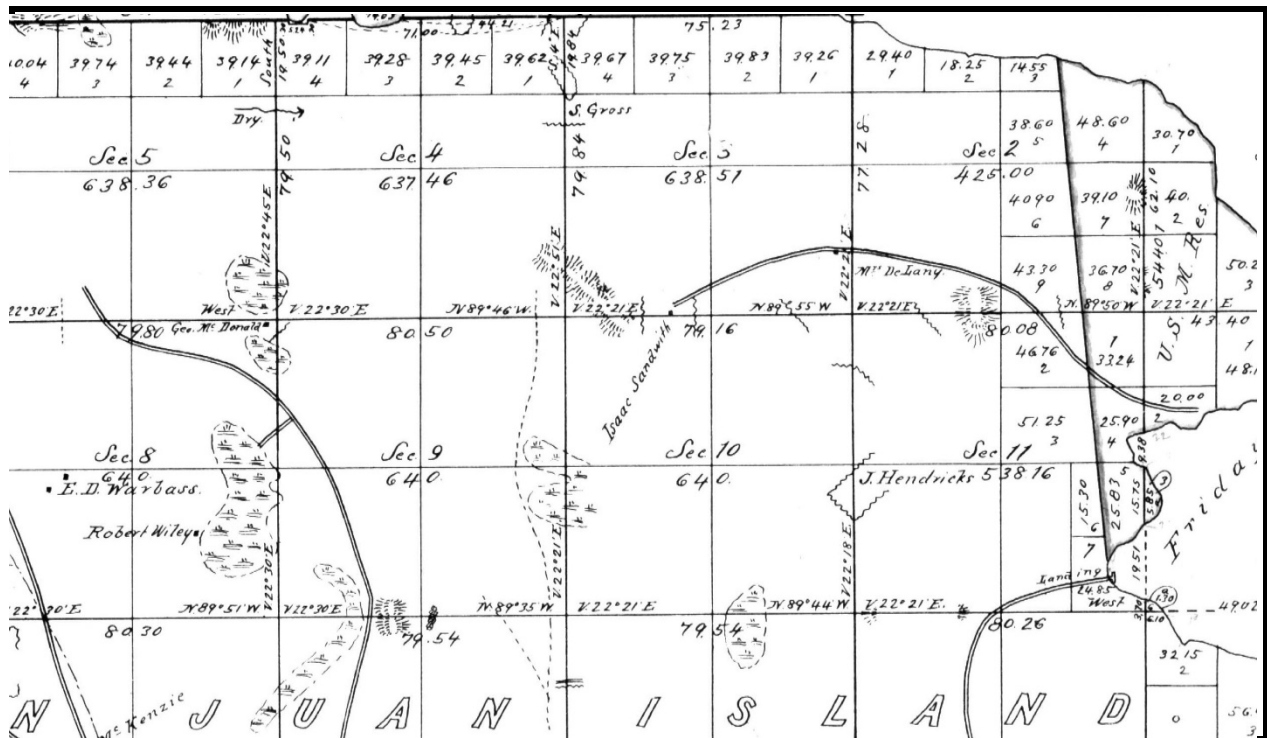
North between 10 & 11: 26.00 [1,716] “To S.W. cor. of J. Hendrick’s swamp, field fence brs. N.E. & S.W. Swamp bears N.E. & S.W. thence across field.”; 67.13 [4,431] “Re-enter swale at Mrs. Delaney’s fence bearing W. & S.E.”; 80.00 [5,280] “In wild tea & cranberry swale...” *Summary:* “Swale land level, excellent soil... Undergrowth same & in swale Washington Tea.”

North between 2 & 3: 15.00 [990] “Leave swale bearing N.W. & S.E.”; 17.90 [1,181] “Wagon road E. & W. Widow Delaney’s dwelling is W. 6.00 chs. [396 feet], thence through old slashing.” *Summary:* “Land rolling swamp & alder bottom good soil... Undergrow same & willow.”

East between 3 & 10: 63.44 [4,187] “Widow Delaney’s fence N.W. & S.E. thence through marsh.” *Summary:* “Land rolling in swamp bottom & deadening 1st rate.”

East between 2 & 11: 19.50 [1,287] “Leave swale bearing N.W. & S.E.”; 19.84 [1,309] “Widow De Lany’s[sic] fence N.W. & S.E.” *Summary:* “Swamp land excellent soil.”

In addition to identifying specific cultural artifacts such as houses and fences, in general this record indicates that the marshland was dominated by “cranberry” (probably Bog Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* L.) and “Washington Tea” (probably Labrador Tea *Rhododendron groenlandicum*), as well as hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*), red alder (*Alnus rubra*), and willow (*Salix* spp.).



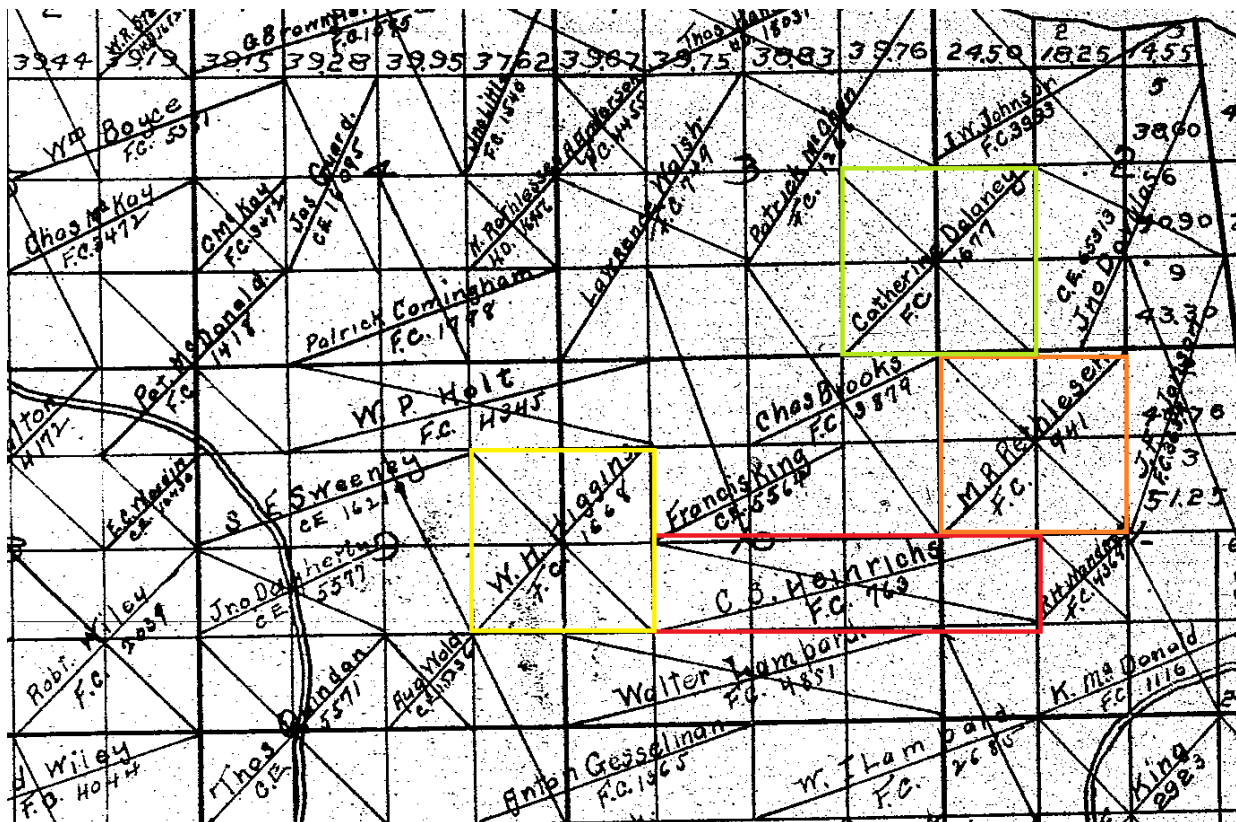
Beaverton Valley Marsh, 1874 Township and Range Survey

The map that resulted from the survey indicates several of the natural and cultural features of Beaverton Valley in late 1874. Marshland is indicated in only two areas: to the west end of the lower section, and to the south of the lower section. A wavy, open rectangle represents what must have been a fenced and cultivated field of “J. Hendricks”—possibly the field of Claus Sax Hinrichs on his homestead, which he claimed to have occupied as early as 1871 (three years before the survey). To the north, a road curves from the northern shore of Friday Harbor westward through a spot marked “Mrs Delaney” and then on to a spot named “Isaac Sandwith” (to the west of the study area). Several wavy lines crossing the section lines indicate fences that were encountered, located, and described above.

Homesteads. Public domain in the San Juan Islands was ‘alienated’—transferred to private ownership—through two principal land claim processes: Preemption and Homesteading. In 1841, Congress passed a revised Preemption Land Act, which superseded the original legislation of 1820; it was extended to the Territory of Washington a year after its establishment (1854). This law permitted every white male squatter over 21 years of age to claim 160 acres. In order to do so, the claimant had to secure a certificate from the land office as a declaration to “prove up” with a dwelling and evidence of six months residence. In addition, he had to pay \$1.25 per acre in cash in order to secure title to the land (Scott and De Lorme 1988:31). The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed any head of household or single individual (including single, independent women) over twenty-one years of age to file for a quarter section

(160 acres) of land. After filing a declaration of intent (an “entry”), the claimant had up to six months to occupy the land. If, after fourteen months of settlement and cultivation of the land, the claimant wished, they could purchase the property for a minimum price. However, if they chose the non-cash route, within seven years of the date of entry, the claimant had to submit certified proof of residence and cultivation for a minimum of five years after the date of entry (Scott and De Lorme 1988:31). Both these means of land conveyance yielded not only records of claims (i.e, title), but sometimes revealing descriptions of the land prior to settlement as well as the actual “improvements” such as houses and farm structures, furniture and tools, ditches, fences, and crops.

Because land in San Juan County was not surveyed until 1874, preemption and homestead claims were not processed until the late 1870s. Examination of all land claim records in the San Juan Islands reveal that the number of yearly entrants rose in the 1880s to reach a peak in the 1890s, and then gradually declined through the 1920s (although the last homestead was claimed in the 1930s). Land claims in the study area fit the early part of this pattern, with all the claims occurring in the 1870s and 1880s because of the early settlement of prime farmland on San Juan Island.



Beaverton Valley Marsh, Map of Homestead Claims

The homesteads claimed in the area (see map), in order of award of title, are:

- **Claus Sax Hinrichs** 160 acres, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10 and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 11, T35N R3W on May 1, 1878
- **Matthias Paul Rethlefsen** 160 acres, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 11, T35N R3W on March 1, 1879
- **William H. Higgins** 160 acres, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9 and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10, T35N R3W on October 10, 1881
- **Catherine (Delaney) Brooks** 160 acres, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 2 and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, T35N R3W on June 20, 1884

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

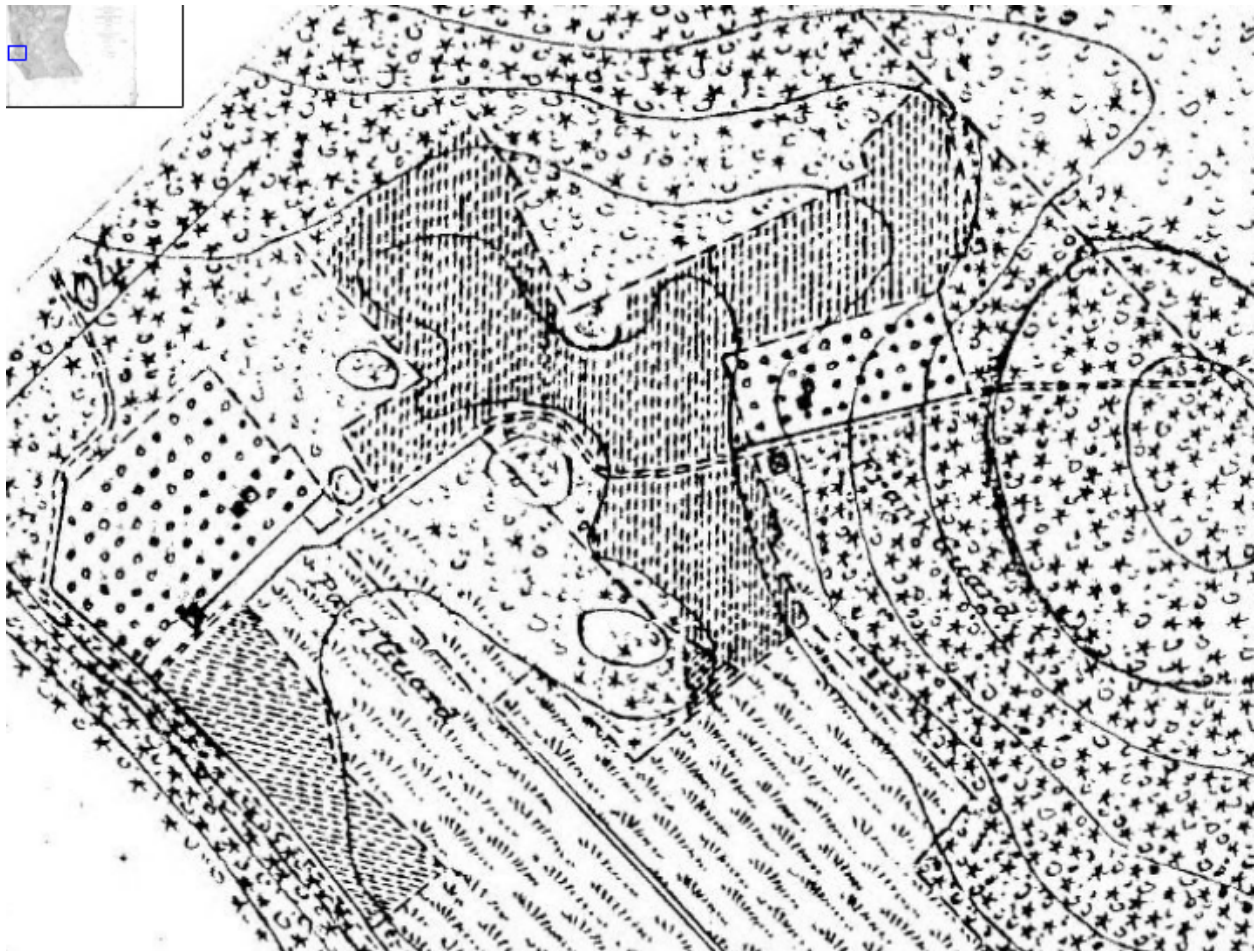
Claus Sax Hinrichs. Little is known about Claus Sax Hinrichs (sometimes spelt as Hinricks, Heinrichs, Heinricks, or Heindricks) except that he was born about 1845, possibly in Prussia, and that he became a naturalized citizen in 1876. Hinrichs applied (Case No. 2715) for a preemption on July 3, 1877. The combined testimony of John Taylor and E. D. Warbass in 1881 stated that he had resided on the property since April 8, 1871 and that “he has built a house...which is 15 x 22 feet having a shake roof lumber floor one door two windows one room fire place & chimney is all furnished and comfortable to live in,” that he had cultivated about 27 acres of land, and had “built a Barn about 40 x 60 feet has made two hundred and seventy one (271) rods [4,472 feet] of ditch, stocked with one yoke of oxen.” They estimated the value of the improvements at about \$600 in gold. Claus Sax Hinrichs received a patent for 160 acres, consisting of N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10 and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 11, T35N R3W, on May 1, 1878.

Matthias Paul Rethlefsen. Matthias (also spelled Mathias) Paul Rethlefsen (1832-1895) was born in Bredstedt, Nordfriesland, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany in 1832. At the age of 20 he stowed away on a ship to America and ended up six years later in California for the Gold Rush. There he was naturalized on May 11, 1860. Rethlefsen visited San Juan Island in 1858 and returned in October 1861 to live there, marrying Ellen (Nellie) George (1845-1902) of the Snohomish Tribe in 1864; they had nine children. According to his obituary (*The Islander* February 21, 1895 p.3), he first settled at Bald Hill (which became the gravel pit) and then at “the McDonald Place.” He filed (Case No. 3636) for a pre-emption in 1876, claiming occupancy of the land on February 5, 1863; he later changed this to a homestead petition (Case No. 3009). According to his testimony, supported by witnesses Fred Jones and John Harkinson, he built a one-room log house, 20 x 24 feet, with a shingle roof, lumber floor, two doors, five windows, and household and kitchen furniture. He claimed to have cultivated 56 acres of land and “built a barn chicken house and has made 300 rods [4,950 feet] of ditch for drainage.” Mathias (the spelling on the documents) Paul Rethlefsen was awarded title to 160 acres consisting of the northwest quarter of Section 11, Township 35 North Range 3 West on March 1, 1879. His obituary notes that on this “tract of land a mile from where Friday Harbor now stands...[a] forest was made to blossom under the hand of the hardy pioneer family which had grown up around him.”

William H. Higgins. William Harrison Higgins (1848-1928) was born in Illinois and married Matilda Jane King (1853-1924), daughter of Francis and Sarah Ann Lee King (who came to San Juan Island in the 1870s) in Yamhill, Oregon, in 1875. (He was appointed postmaster for Friday Harbor, Washington Territory on March 20, 1876.) Although he did not file for a homestead until December 1875 (Case No. 2715), he claimed to have settled on the place as early as May 1, 1873, “prior to the government survey” (September 1874). Among the improvements to the property he (and his witnesses, Thomas McCarty and Patrick McGhran) mentioned “a dwelling 12 x 24 (log house) 3 rooms, 4 doors, 3 windows, barn and out buildings, 60 acres under fence, orchard, fencing and ditching.” On this land, he claimed to have cultivated about 10 acres for seven years. He was awarded title to 160 acres consisting of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9 and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10, T35N R3W on October 10, 1881.

Catherine (Delaney) Brooks. Catherine Manning (1833-1906) was born in Tipperary, Ireland, about 1833; at some point she married Richard Delaney (also born in Tipperary, Ireland, in 1824); they had several children, two of whom were born in Oregon Territory and four of whom were born in Washington Territory. By the time of the 1870 federal census of “The Disputed Islands,” her husband Richard was listed as part of the American Garrison and she and their six children, ranging in age from 1 to 13, in the general census. Richard must have died around 1875, because in 1876, “Catherine Delaney, widow,” applied for a homestead of 160 acres (W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 2 and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, T35N R3W) under the homestead law’s provisions for widows of deceased soldiers (Case No. 1677). Consequent to marrying Charles Brooks (1845-1930) on Christmas Day, 1876, she changed the application to note her new married status. After going through the necessary paperwork to prove: 1) that she was the same Catherine Delaney who had originally applied; 2) that she was a widow, her husband Richard Delaney having indeed died; and 3) that she had remarried and that her new husband, Charles Brooks, was a citizen of the United States. She received title on June 20, 1884. In her homestead application, both she and her two witnesses (Martin [Matthias?] P. Rethlefsen and John H. Bowman) noted that she had built a 20’ x 40’ two-room house “of logs and lumber” (4 windows 2 doors) by August of 1875, and a chicken house, granary, barn, and well, as well as planting an orchard and cultivating 40 acres “with a good fence.” Noted in all of her witness’ accounts is ditching, although this is less specific than in other applications. Her occupation of the claim during the 1870s is corroborated by the J. M. Whitworth’s *Field Notes* for the Township and Range Survey, which noted both “Widow Delaney’s dwelling” and her fence line, in several places. The 1895 USC&GS Map (see below) indicates a dwelling and several outbuildings as well as fencing, an orchard, and cultivated fields. Catherine Manning Delaney Brooks died in 1905 and is buried, along with her husband Charles Brooks, in the St. Francis Catholic Church Cemetery in San Juan Valley.

Later Owners. After the homestead claims were ‘proved up’ and titles issued, several of the homesteaders continued to work their property, but some sold almost right away. The first to sell was Claus Sax Hinrichs, who conveyed his 160 acres within a year to Daniel Madden. Four years later (1883) Madden and his wife Elizabeth sold it to Daniel Ronan, and a year after that he, in turn, sold it to Edward T. Jones. He and his wife Catherine Jane sold half of it to G. B. Driggs in 1893. When Edward died the next year, his wife settled the estate and quitclaimed it to Wheeler Stevens. From there the property goes through several owners. It is not clear why the 1895 USC&GS T-sheet indicates “W. H. Higgins” located where Hinrichs had originally homesteaded.



Beaverton Valley Marsh, Paul & Frank Guard Farmsteads, 1895 T-Sheet

William H. Higgins and his wife Matilda sold his homestead to Paul Guard in 1889. Guard and his wife Elizabeth (Lizzie) immediately sold the northern half (80 acres) to their son Frank for \$1,500. Both properties remained in the Guard family until well into the twentieth century. The 1901 *Supplement to the San Juan Islander* describes the Guards' property:

The first ranch one reaches on the road from Friday Harbor to Roche Harbor, worthy of notice, is that of Paul Guard and his son

Frank. Here, in two tracts of eighty acres each, almost all of which is under cultivation, lays a most beautiful stretch of land, the great portion of which is beaver marshland, the very best known.

Enormous crops of wheat, oats and hay are raised. This year fifty acres of the peat bottom were out in oats—great tall, well-filled oats. Mr. Guard has a bearing orchard of 200 trees. His son also, has a fine orchard at his place.

The United States Coast & Geodetic Survey T-sheet of the area shows the orchard and what appears to be cultivation of some of the marsh land.

Matthias Paul Rethlefsen, prior to his death in 1895, had obtained a mortgage on the property from A. O. Benjamin and later (1894) mortgaged his and Nellie's property to William and Sarah Holt. After Rethlefsen's death, the Sheriff conducted an estate sale to Peter Lawson. There were several subsequent transfers of title, including the sale by the San Juan County Bank—probably a foreclosure—to James F. King of "the 160-acre farm close to town known as the Rethlefsen farm" (*The San Juan Islander* September 14, 1899 p.3).



Beaverton Valley Marsh, Charles Brooks (Catherine Delaney) 1895 T-Sheet

The year (1904) before she died, Catherine Delaney Brooks quitclaimed half of her homestead each to her husband Charley (Charles) Brooks and to her son Edward Delaney (1867-1915). In 1947, Albin (Al) Sundstrom and his wife Winnie obtained a mortgage on this land ("the old Delaney Place") and the same year purchased it from Frank H. Wright, Harold L. Wright, Thomas E. and Marcella M. Delaney, and Evelyn L. and Morris D. Hodge, heirs of Harriet M. Delaney Wright [widow of Edward Delaney}, for \$13,000. Sundstrom farmed this property until he sold it to the San Juan County Land Bank in 2001.

In 1894, brokers Nordyke & Hackett of Friday Harbor advertised in *The Islander* a 160-acre farm for sale in Beaverton Valley for \$40 per acre:

**We have for sale one of the
Finest Improved Farms
IN SAN JUAN COUNTY**

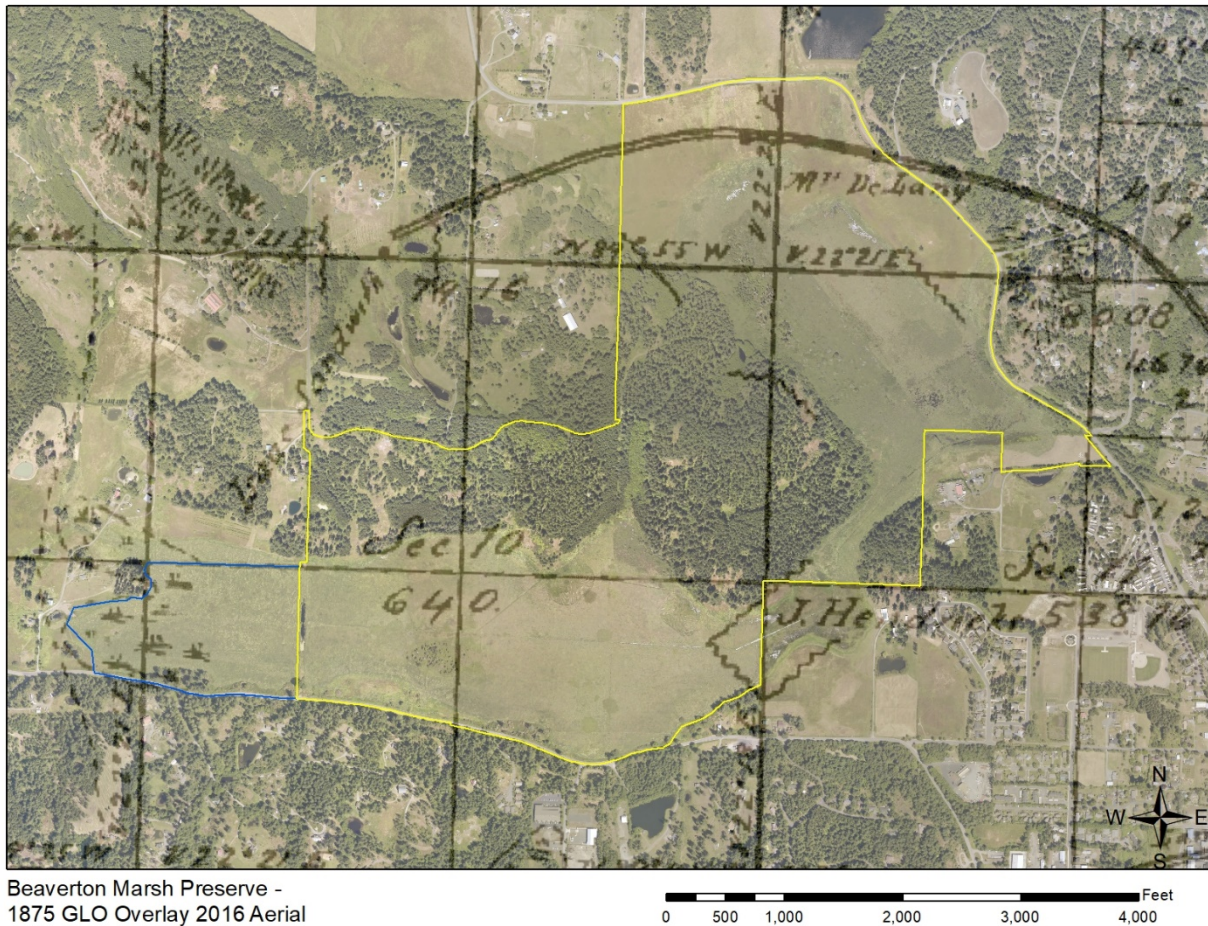
It consists of 160 acres two and half miles from Friday Harbor, county seat of San Juan County, situated on the well travelled county road in Beaverton Valley, and is without doubt one of the most desirable farms to be had in the state. Seventy acres under a high state of cultivation and in crop—mostly oats and four acres of potatoes; has two good orchards with 575 trees, 250 of which are in bearing; all kinds of small fruits; 20 acres partly cleared; all fenced and cross fenced. There are on the place two houses, one frame the other a log house root house, wood sheds, two barns[sic] and other out building. There are 60 acres bottom land and all can be put into cultivation except forty acres and that is good pasture land with plenty of the best of water. The place is well ditch and under drained.

Also two horses, wagon, plows, harrow, cultivator and other farm machinery; four young milch cows, two pure-bred sows, pigs, chickens, etc.

Although the location, sellers, or buyers of this farm have not been determined, it is typical of farmsteads on the island in general and exemplary of farms in Beaverton Valley specifically. Farmers with land in the Valley used the marshlands for growing cereal crops: the ad mentions “60 acres bottom land” and a crop of “mostly oats.” The drier slopes were used for orchards, as well as cultivated crops, and pasturage, principally for dairy cows. Infrastructure such as buildings and roads was also located on these slopes.

George B. Rigg in his description of Beaverton Valley in *The Peat Resources of Washington* mentions that P. N. Girard had a 5-acre garden on a small area to the north of Beaverton Valley Road. (There is no record in the San Juan County documents of his owning land there, so it is not clear whose land he was using.) Rigg mentions specifically that “the main crops grown in [Girard’s] garden are potatoes and mangels, but carrots, onions, cauliflower, and celery are also produced.” The 1932 aerial clearly indicates a farmstead at that location, with what appears to be a house and garden and possibly some outbuildings.

Roads. The Township and Range Survey Map of 1874 indicates several roads accessing the farms of Beaverton Valley. Along the western edge of the southern marsh is a dotted line indicating a rough road or track that ran in a north-south direction. To the north, a double line indicates a road that curves in an arc from a landing on the north shore of Friday Harbor (near the present-day University of Washington Friday Harbor Labs) to the location of present-day Halvorsen Road: half-way is a solid square with the denotation “Mrs. DeLany” and at its western terminus is “Isaac Sandwith.”



Beaverton Valley Marsh, 2016 Aerial Photo with 1875 Survey Overlay

Two records from the San Juan County Commissioners *Journal* indicate further work on these roads. In August of 1882, Charles Brooks petitioned for a change in the road at his place:

In the matter of the petition presented by Chas. Brooks asking for a change in the public road running from the County Seat to the farm of John Little, said change to be as follows,-commencing from the gate, on the south side of Charles Brooks' field, thence running in a northerly direction to the S. E. corner of said field, then along the line between the claims of Charles Brooks and I. Katz, and again connect with the Public Road at or near Lawrence Welsh's farm.

Charles Brooks was ordered to file a \$100 bond with the auditor and two viewers, E. D. Warbass and John H. Bowman, were appointed. These changes were approved later that year. Six years later (1888), Beaverton Valley Road was worked on, but it is not clear what was done at that time. A June 20, 1913 article in *The San Juan Islander* noted that "The Beaverton valley road from Friday Harbor to Roche Harbor over Cady mountain, has just been

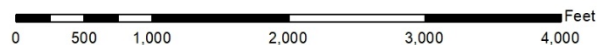
completed. The road was petitioned for two years ago. The road is shortened by half a mile.” Again, it is not clear what work was done near Beaverton Valley.

By the time of the United States Coast & Geodetic Survey (1895), the sheets indicate a (dashed) road along the southern edge of the marsh as well as a north-south lane running past the Guard Farm (see below). To the north, a road (in part two lines, a dashed line on another) runs along the contour lines that define the northern edge of the marsh, passing through Charles Brooks’ place, Henry Jenkins’, and on to F. King’s.

Sometime between 1932 and 1941 a county road running directly north-south was put in through the marsh along a line that bisects the northern portion of the southwest quarter of Section 10 and continuing north into the elevated, wooded area of the northwest quarter of Section 10. Local legend, which needs to be substantiated, relates that while a county work crew took a lunch break their idling equipment sank into the marsh.



1895 Beaverton Marsh Preserve



Beaverton Valley Marsh, Two 1895 and one 1897 T-sheets “Stitched”

Drainage Ditches. In the 1870s and 1880s the Washington Territorial Legislature passed several laws enabling counties to establish drainage districts and thus support through local levies on property owners the construction of ditches, dams, and watercourses. These projects allowed farmers easier access to the rich bottom soil of the valleys, which retained moisture during the dry summers. In 1892 farmers in Beaverton Valley successfully petitioned the San Juan County Board of Commissioners to establish a drainage district (Number One) in order to drain the water from the marshy land, “said district to include all natural tributaries which are drained by said Beaverton Valley also, and to cause to be surveyed and construct a Ditch to drain the same.” The description of the project area, which includes mention of an old ditch, was:

Commencing at the N.W.¼ of the South East ¼ of Sec. 9, Township 35 N. Range 3 W., thence through the same to the premises of Paul Guard, thence to run in an Easterly direction on the line of the old ditch now partly constructed, to the beach on the Military Reservation adjoining Sec. (2.) and (11.) north of Friday Harbor the distance being about three miles or thereabout, of said ditch and water course...”

The County Commissioners responded by ordering a survey of the proposed ditch and on July 1, 1892, the surveyors presented their report. Placing a marker every 100 feet and at each angle of change in direction, they mention several details pertaining to the ownership and use of Beaverton Valley:

0 survey commences on Joseph Sweeney’s land;
 685 feet cross county road;
 758 line between Sweeney’s and Paul Guard’s, which contains about 50 acres of marsh land (of his total 80);
 3386 line between Guard’s and Hatte A. Range’s;
 5934 line between Range’s and Edward Jones’;
 8634 ft. an angle near Jone’s house—he has 55 acres in marsh land (of 80 total);
 8764 boundary between Jones’ and J. E. Ellis’ property (100 acres of marsh land out of 160 total);
 10286 “angle near intersection of Brooks Ditch. Private Road crossing. Pole bridge of no value”;
 11505 “angle at center of County Bridge on line between Ellis and King Marshes end here at County Road; Bridge will not interfere with making ditch”;
 11898 stake at angle on James King farm, who has about 3-4 acres that would be benefited, but “he is chiefly benefitted by the ditch in that without one he would be overflown on his bottom or low land”;
 12071 “angle near old beaver dam”;
 12470 “to angle stake opposite Kings barn”;
 13298 “To private bridge on road heading north toward Mil. Reserv. From this point to the beach the line was surveyed...”

Mention made of the “Brooks Ditch” indicates that Catherine Delaney and Charles Brooks had previously established a ditch through their homesteads, as indicated by her homestead application. In summarizing data given him by P. N. Girard, who was knowledgeable about history of the valley from former residents, George B. Rigg indicated that a ditch had originally been dug through the valley as early as 1875. The testimony (see above) of several of the homesteaders indicates ditching in the 1860s and 1870s: Rethlefsen (first occupation 1863) mentions 300 rods [4,950 feet]; Higgins (occupation 1871) mentions 271 rods [4,472 feet]; and William H. Higgins (occupation 1873) and Catherine Delaney (occupation 1876) and their witnesses, although not mentioning a specific length, describe ditching in general.

After falling into disrepair, in December 1911 the Beaverton Valley Ditch was revitalized through formation of an Association that could assess and tax landowners along the ditch for necessary repairs and improvements. By this time the “Beaverton Valley Ditch” was defined as draining “...by means of two branches which connect with the outlet [into Friday Harbor Bay] at or near the point where the County Road crosses the sixteenth section line between Lots 2 and 3, Section 11, Township 35 North, Range 3 West...” The signatories to this agreement were Frank and Alice Guard, Edward and Hattie Delaney, Charles Brooks, Ben and Ida King, Milo and Sadie Smoots, James F. King, John and Myrle Taylor, James A. and Jennie B. King, and Ray King.

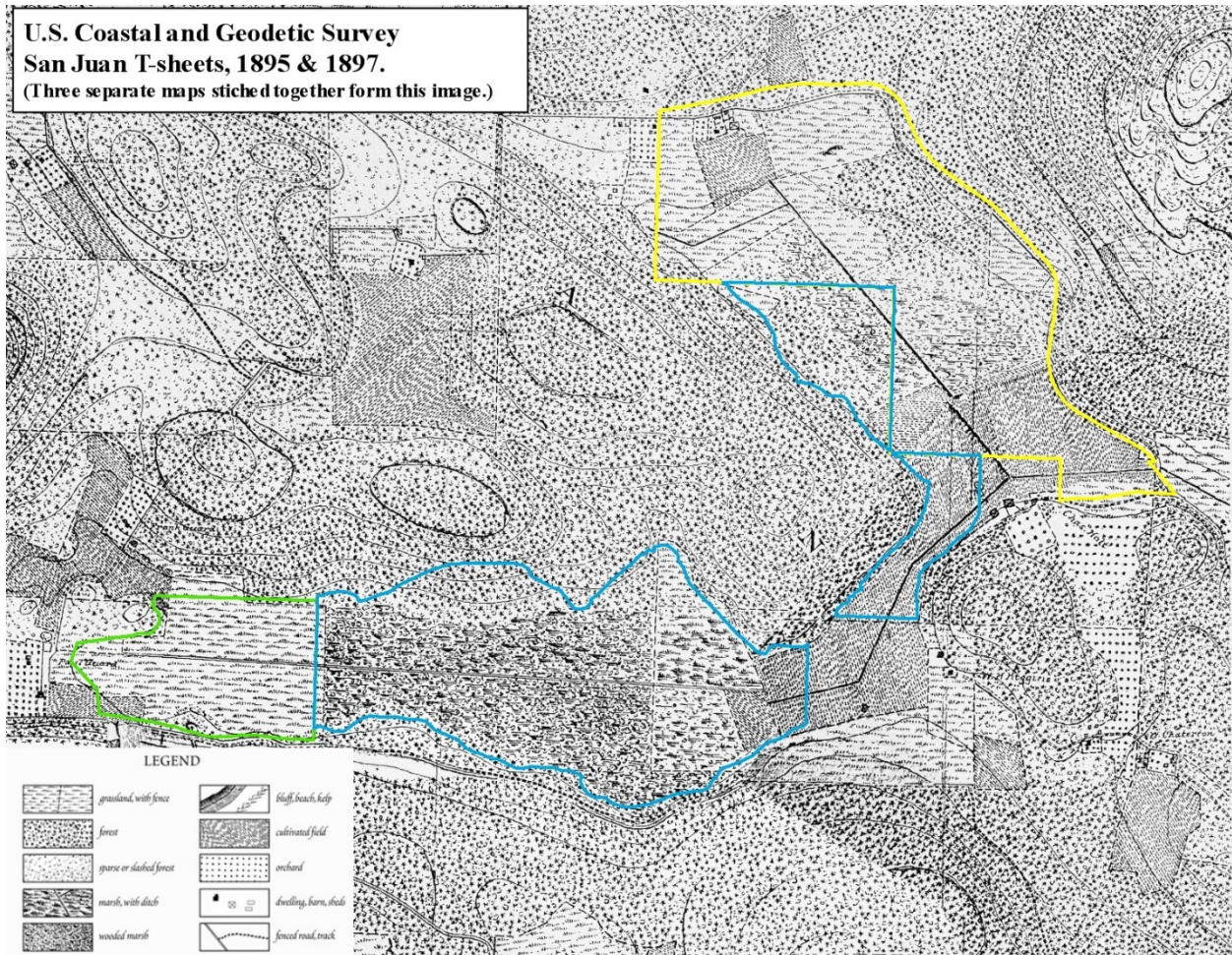
George B. Rigg, in his 1953 study *Peat Resources of Washington*, noted: As long as the ditch was cleaned out and deepened from time to time it provided good drainage. In July 1953 it was much in need of cleaning and perhaps deepening. No water was flowing in it at that time, but there was shallow standing water in some places.

At present, although one can trace the remains of the drainage ditches, they are not maintained and appear to have been abandoned for some time.

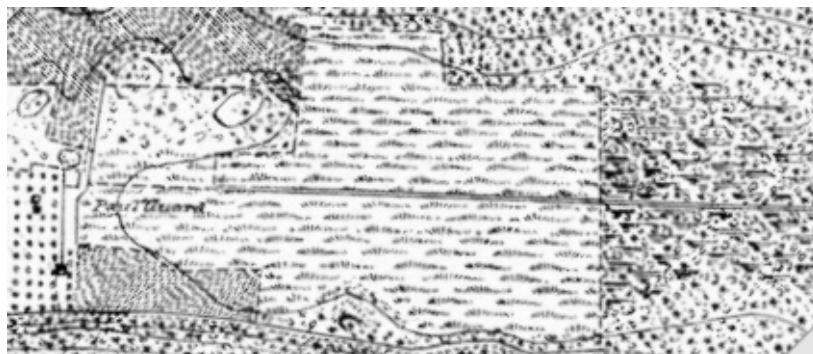
United States Coast & Geodetic Survey T-sheets. In the 1890s, Captain J. J. Gilbert and his United States Coast & Geodetic Survey team surveyed San Juan Island, including Beaverton Valley in 1895 and again in 1897. The Valley is mostly covered on the sheet entitled “Part of San Juan Island” (1895) while the lower section, down to where it drains into Friday Harbor, is on “Orcas, Shaw, and San Juan Islands” (1897). (These two sheets have been merged to give a full image of the project area; a third sheet was added to fill in the portion to the south of Beaverton Valley Road.)

Overall, the maps indicate the marshy areas of the two sections of valley, framed by roads to the south and north, and transected by two drainage ditches that converge to the east to drain to the Harbor. On the far western end of Beaverton Valley Marsh are the farmsteads of Paul and Frank Guard. Paul Guard’s, abutting the road to the north, has a cultivated field in the marsh and a house and several outbuildings surrounded by orchards. Frank Guard’s, located up a lane to the north, has extensive fields on the slopes below his place, which includes a house and several buildings in an orchard. The marsh to the east of the Guard’s place has symbols of fenced pastureland

bisected by a drainage ditch (indicated by two lines—possibly because of disuse?), which continues east through symbols of marshy land.



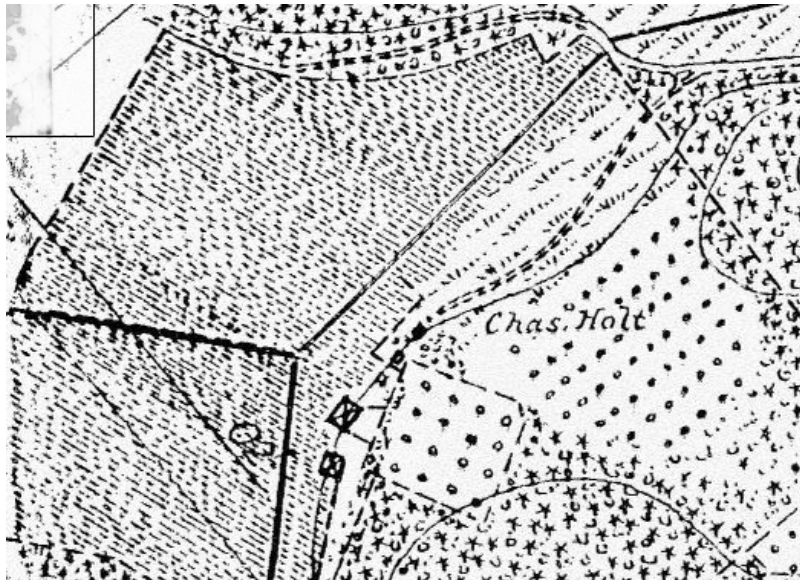
Beaverton Valley Marsh: 1895 and 1897 T-sheets “Stitched”



Paul Guard Farmstead with Marsh and Ditch, 1895 T-sheet

At the east end of the lower marsh, the ditch (which is indicated by a solid line) angles northeast, through the cultivated fields of “W. H. Higgins,” who also has a house and several outbuildings and fenced pastureland on the rise to the

east of the marsh. To the northeast, beyond a hill, the drainage ditches converge, and there are several buildings along a lane and an extensive orchard, labelled “Chas. Holt.”



“Chas. Holt” Farmstead with merging Drainage Ditches, 1895 T-sheet

To the northwest, marked as “Charles Brooks,” is an extensive farmstead: two fields on to the north and south of the road; an orchard; and a dwelling and several outbuildings (see Map in previous section). All of these conform to the original settlement pattern as indicated by the Township and Range Survey and the homestead documentation, as well as the later drainage ditch district survey and legal descriptions.



Beaverton Valley Marsh, Harvesting Oats, Guard Farm

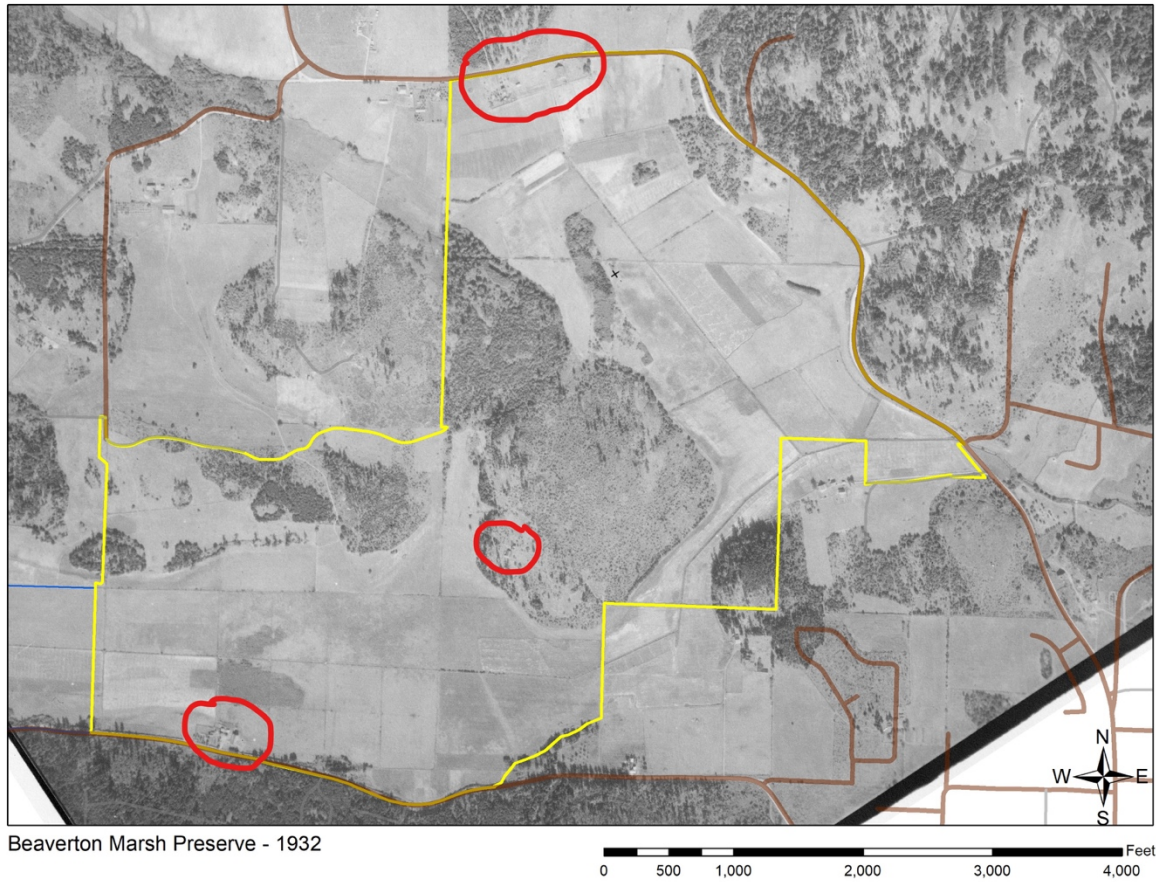


Beaverton Valley Marsh, Shocks of Oats, Guard Farm



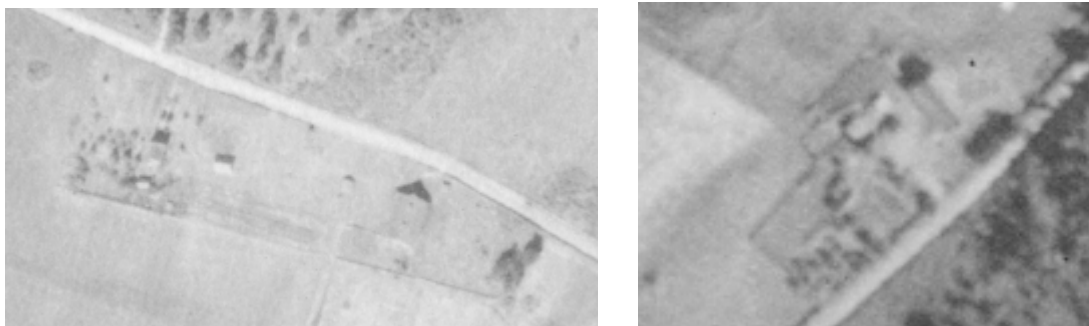
Photo of the Delaney Place. There are several photographs from the 1960s-1980s that Al Sundstrom gave to the Land Bank. One of these indicates the ruins of a one-and-a-half story, wood frame house with the roof gone; nearby is a cherry tree and one can see narcissus in the 'yard'. This appears to be the only record of what once was the more extensive farmstead established by Catherine Delaney and Charles Brooks.

Aerial Photos. The earliest known set of aerial photos taken of Beaverton Valley date from **1932**. This tile (individual shot) indicates the drainage ditch running through the middle of the marsh, with several cross-fences delineating fields.



Beaverton Valley Marsh, 1932 Aerial Photo

Both the Delaney Place, to the north, and the Girard garden and structures, to the southwest, are clearly visible.



1932 Aerial Close-ups of Delaney Place (rotated) and Girard Garden



1932 Aerial Close-up of Barn and Outbuilding

There are also two buildings, one a barn and the other unknown, in the elevated, wooded area to the north of middle of the southern section.



1941 Beaverton Marsh Preserve

Beaverton Valley Marsh 1941 Aerial

0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 Feet

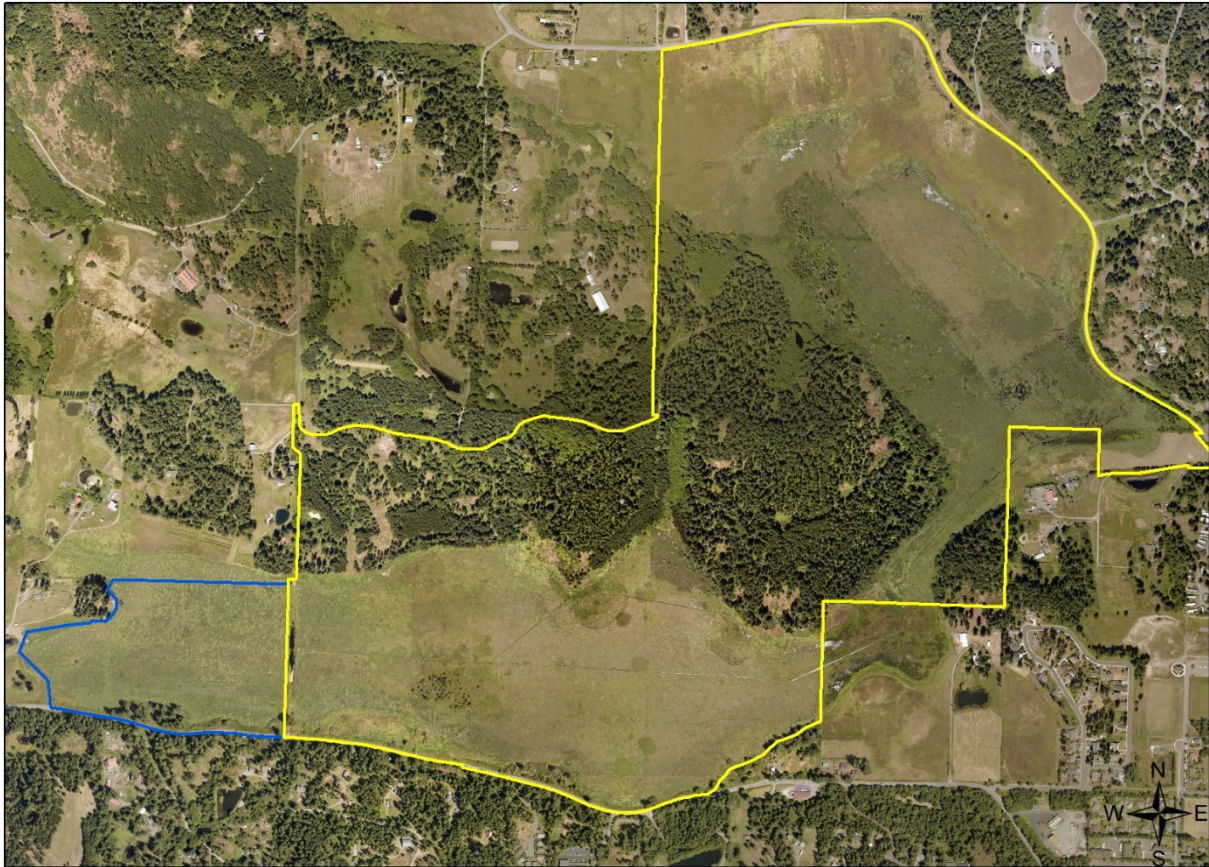
The next aerial photo, **1941**, covers the full extent of the Valley. It indicates the two ditches running through the middle of the north and south sections, with the southern ditch angling northeastwards to meet the common, final drainage ditch. Distinct fields within the marshy area can be seen delineated by fencing. There is also a road running directly north-south along a line that bisects the northern portion of the southwest quarter of Section 10 and continuing north into the elevated, wooded area of the northwest quarter of Section 10. There is not enough resolution to determine extant structures.



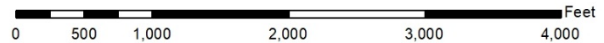
1972 Beaverton Marsh Preserve

0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 Feet

By the time of next aerial photograph, **1972**, there appears to be a vegetated fence line along the former road and very little remaining, if at all, of the Delaney Place structures (only fruit trees), but there does seem to still be a structure where the Girard Garden was located and the two structures in the elevated wooded area still have traces.



2016 Beaverton Marsh Preserve



Beaverton Valley Marsh 2016 Aerial Photo

On a modern aerial, **2016**, one can still see the ditch and fence lines, but nothing remains of the Delaney and Girard structures, and it is difficult to discern the structures on the middle wooded area.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Document the changes to the road systems along Beaverton Valley, particularly the development of the road along the southern edge as well as the north-south road crossing the southern section.
- Determine the ownership of the structures in the middle wooded portion of the Valley.
- Inspect and document the remains of the historic structures at all three of the sites within the study area: the “Old Delaney Place,” the Girard Garden, and the middle wooded site.
- Research the homesteads adjacent to the four already studied, particularly those of Charles Brooks, W. P. Holt, and Francis King.
- Determine the full title records of the Hinrichs and Rethlefsen homesteads.

Methodology

Boyd C. Pratt, Mulno Cove Creations, LLC, was contracted by the San Juan Preservation Trust to research and study the cultural history of Beaverton Valley Marsh, San Juan Island, San Juan County, Washington, in May 2019. Among the resources consulted were: primary documents such as historic maps and surveys, land ownership records, historic newspaper accounts, historic photographs, genealogies, and oral histories. The study focused on the history of the uses of Beaverton Valley Marsh, with an emphasis on how they changed its environment.

Acknowledgements

Craig Canine, San Juan Preservation Trust, for information on the Beaverton Marsh Preserve; Eliza Habegger and Doug McCutchen, San Juan County Landbank, for aerial photos and maps as well as reports on the geology, soils, and flora and fauna of Beaverton Valley; Bob Guard and Shaun Hubbard for photographs and information on the Paul Guard Family; Jeff Sharp and Eric Stone, III, San Juan County Public Works, for aerial photos and information on the early road systems.

Boyd C. Pratt

Mulno Cove Creations, LLC
2551 Cattle Point Road
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

mulnocove@gmail.com
(360) 298-4018

Primary Sources

Aerial Photographs

- 1932 (Tiles courtesy of San Juan County Public Works; Overlay of Preserve Boundaries courtesy of San Juan County Land Bank)
- 1941 (Overlay of Preserve Boundaries courtesy of San Juan County Land Bank)
- 1972 (Overlay of Preserve Boundaries courtesy of San Juan County Land Bank)
- 2016 (Overlay of Preserve Boundaries courtesy of San Juan County Land Bank)

Archival Records

Homestead Applications, National Archives and Records Administration

- *Claus Sax Hinrichs* Case No. 2715 May 1, 1878
- *Matthias Paul Rethlefsen* Case No. 3009 March 1, 1879
- *William H. Higgins* Case No. 1268 October 10, 1881
- *Catherine (Delaney) Brooks* Case No. 1677 June 20, 1884

Genealogy

- Ancestry.com <https://www.ancestry.com/>

Maps

- Township and Range Survey (1874) with Field Notes
- United States Coast & Geodetic Survey T-sheets (1895 and 1897)

Newspapers

- Library of Congress “Chronicling America”
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085190/issues/>: on-line searches of *The Islander* (1891-1899) and *The San Juan Islander* (1898-1914)
- Newspapers.com <https://www.newspapers.com/>

Photographs

- Bob Guard, historic photos of Beaverton Valley
- San Juan Historical Museum, historic photos of Beaverton Valley
- San Juan County Land Bank, historic photos of Al Sundstrom property

San Juan County Recorded Documents

- Recorded Documents for properties in Beaverton Valley
<https://www.sanjuanco.com/171/Recorded-Document-Search>

Publications

Beyshaw, Roberta L. *No Better Land: The 1860 Diaries of the Anglican Colonial Bishop George Hills* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1996).

Thor Hanson, *Sundstrom Property Ecological Assessment* (2002), report on file, San Juan County Land Bank.

George B. Rigg, *Peat Resources of Washington*, Division of Mines and Geology Bulletin No. 44 (Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Conservation, 1958).

Scott, James W., and Roland L. De Lorme, *Historical Atlas of Washington* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).