



BELLE VUE SHEEP FARM

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The Setting

San Juan Island is located in the northwest portion of Washington State, bounded by Haro Strait, which separates it from Vancouver Island to the west, and San Juan Channel, which lies between this and the other major islands of the San Juan archipelago: Lopez, Orcas, and Shaw. Geologically, the San Juan Islands consist of older base rock associated with the surrounding Cascade and Olympic ranges. During the Pleistocene Era, a series of three great glaciations occurred, with the ice reaching as far south as modern day Olympia, filling the depression known as the Puget trough and leaving only the surrounding mountain ranges uncovered. Upon their recession, the glaciers not only scraped the existing rocky areas, but also left behind glacial till, as well as the large boulders, called erratics, that can be seen standing unmoved in the middle of farm fields and pastures.¹

After the release of the weight of the glacial ice, the islands gradually rose in a process called elastic rebound. During the same period, however, the melting of the receding glaciers also caused a gradual rise in sea level, so that the result of these forces led to a series of shorelines that have differed from the current one. In all probability, large portions of San Juan Island were under the ocean at one time. This, together with the glacial action, resulted in three general soil associations: poorly-drained basins and low glacial till plains of Bellingham-Coveland-Bow soils interspersed with small outcrops or 'islands' of Roche-Rock complex; moderate to well drained glacial till plains and rocky uplands of Roche and San Juan soils; and excessively drained outwash plains and glaciated uplands of San Juan and Everett soils. While the first two associations correspond roughly to the valley areas and the rocky uplands of the northern portion of the island, the third describes the southern end, which was the setting for the original "Establishment" and "Home Prairie" of Belle Vue Sheep Farm.²

The San Juans have a weather system unique to the Pacific Northwest. Located in the rain shadow produced by the Cascades to the east and the Olympics to the south, the islands have an average rainfall of 29 inches per year (based on the record station at Olga on Orcas Island, 1890 to present). On San Juan Island itself, this ranges from a low of 19 at Cattle Point to the south to 29 at Roche Harbor to the north. The climate in the San Juans is mild, tempered by the surrounding seawaters and westerly winds. Due to the rain shadow, the number of days of sunshine is high compared to the surrounding region. Temperatures range from an average of 40 degrees F in the winter to 59 in the summer. San Juan Island has an historic average of 226 frost-free days (the 'growing season'), although low-lying pockets have been known to experience freezing in July. However, because the majority of precipitation occurs during the winter months (70% from October through March), farms usually experience drought conditions during the summer, favoring either crops that need little water, farming in water-retentive soils, or irrigation.³

The island was mainly forested in Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), various species of fir (*Abies spp.*) and pine (*Pinus spp.*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), with some wetter, swampy areas of red alder (*Alnus rubra*), Western red-cedar (*Thuja picata*), and willow (*Salix spp.*). In addition, there were meadows or prairies, sometimes associated with Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) and Rocky Mountain junipers (*Juniper scopulorum*), which probably contained grass coverings of Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), California oatgrass (*Danthonia californica*) and junegrass (*Koeleria cristata*). There was an abundance of animal wildlife on the island. Larger mammals included beaver, black bear, deer, elk, and wolves. Marine wildlife was also abundant, as well as a large number of species of wildfowl.⁴

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, various groups of Native Americans, collectively called Northern Straits Salish, including the Lummi, Saanich, Samish, Semiahmoo, Songhees, and Sooke, seasonally occupied San Juan Island. They built villages consisting of longhouses constructed of cedar poles roofed and sided with planks. Their principal food source on the island was salmon, which annually migrated from the Pacific Ocean, past the Salmon Banks reef off the south end of the island, to the Fraser River, either via Haro Strait, to the west, or Rosario Strait, to the east between the islands and the mainland. The Salish also collected several varieties of shellfish and caught shorebirds. Inland activities included hunting animals and gathering wild plants. One of the primary gathered roots was camas (*Camasseia quamash* and *C. leichtlinii*), which grew in open meadows or prairies. These spaces may have been deliberately kept clear of shrubs and trees, in order to maintain proper habitat for camas as well as nettles (*Urtica dioica*), by

fires set by the Indians just prior to their abandonment of the island and return to the mainland for the winter season.⁵

It was the presence of the Straits Salish peoples fishing the seasonal runs of salmon that first attracted the Hudson's Bay Company to establish an outpost on San Juan Island. The initial Company operations on San Juan Island were seasonal fishing stations: encampments where items such as blankets were traded for salmon, and then the fish was packed in salt brine in large wood barrels. While Governor James Douglas later recollected that this was begun in 1850, he wrote to Company Secretary Archibald Barclay in a letter of 25 June, 1851, that a Company boat was "now taking in salt and barrels for a fishery which we propose establishing in the Island of San Juan".⁶ William John MacDonald, who was sent at that time, does not indicate that he had a predecessor.

In the month of June [1851] I was sent to San Juan Island to establish a salmon fishery, starting in a canoe, with an Indian crew, Joseph W. McKay as pilot and locator of a site, and four French Canadian workmen. We selected a small sheltered bay, erected a rough shed for salting, packing and curing of salmon, not known at that time, afterwards to become such an extensive and remunerative industry.⁷

On the same "small sheltered bay" MacDonald and his men erected "a very primitive rough shelter—four posts stuck in the ground with a cedar bark roof on" for sleeping. Later his four workmen built a house "of round logs with bedstead and table of the same". That season the crew only put up 60 barrels of salted salmon.⁸

The Establishment

On December 15th, 1853, Chief Factor James Douglas and a company of men consisting of a multiethnic mix of Europeans, Hawaiians, and Indians landed 1369 sheep and a variety of other animals on the southern end of San Juan Island, establishing Belle Vue Sheep Farm. For a site of the farm compound, Douglas chose:

...the banks of a rivulet, in the centre of a dry elevated sheep run containing about 1500 acres of clear prairie land, besides a large extent of brush land. This land yields excellent grass and will support from 2000 to 3000 head of sheep. I have placed Mr Charles Griffin temporarily in charge of that establishment...⁹

During the time of initial settling in, the men undoubtedly camped in tents while they began work on more permanent structures.¹⁰ Griffin had his men first build a house for himself, and then proceeded to construct the rest of a complex ("the Establishment") that would eventually comprise seven or eight buildings around a central open space. These included several men's houses, a root house, a kitchen, a

wood shed, and a well. In addition, there were several outbuildings including privies, a hen house, at least two barns, and some sheds, as well as a flagpole and saw pit. Other structures built nearby included one or more sheep sheds, a boat shed at the beach, and a fishery house.

The large open space to the east of the compound, which was already a grassy prairie, was initially used for grazing for the 1,369 sheep as well as 1 horse, 1 stallion, 1 mare, 2 cows and calves, 1 heifer, 1 boar, and 1 sow with young that Douglas and Griffin had initially brought from Nisqually.¹¹ Almost immediately more pasture was sought out and developed for the sheep operations, until almost the whole island consisted of a patchwork of sheep runs. A road—"Cowitchin Road"-- was run north to the center of the island to access Oak Prairie (San Juan Valley, known for its surrounding ring of Garry oaks). Other grazing areas, including Mountain Prairie, Winter Station, and New Station were accessed and developed. At each of these areas a dwelling for the shepherds--usually a log house--and a log corral or "park" were constructed.

Near the farm compound a small field of about 6 acres was enclosed for a garden. Later, a larger field of approximately 40-60 acres (depending on the observer) was cleared, grubbed, ploughed, harrowed, and seeded. These fields were used for the cultivation of peas and oats as fodder for the animals and turnips and potatoes for the men. Griffin also had the area surrounding his house enclosed by a small picket fence for a garden; he took great delight in showing visitors his flowers.

Building improvements, as well as the development of new pasturage and their attendant stations, continued through the years. In 1858, the *Post Journals* record work on a new dairy and root house; a granary; a shed for oats and peas; a stage for loading sheep at the "Old Fishery"; and a wharf or slip at what was first called either "Belle Vue Harbor" or "Grande Bay" and later renamed Griffin Bay. Roads were cut and leveled from Oak Prairie to prairies on other parts of the island and to the Old Fishery House, and from Leroux's Prairie to Park Hill, on the "other side of the Harbor" as well as Channel Prairie.¹²

By the time the inhabitants and structures of the farm were enumerated in a census prepared in 1855 by James Douglas, in his dual capacity as Governor of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island and Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, the establishment included 9 dwelling houses, 1 store or shop, and 5 "out-houses"; 40 acres under cultivation, 2200 sheep, 6 horses, 6 milch cows, 9 working oxen, 6 "other" cattle, 10 swine, and 40 poultry. Among the 29 total inhabitants of the island were 16 men, 3 women, and 10 children (all under 10 years of age).¹³

In 1859, several Americans gave eyewitness accounts of the farm operations during the Pig War, the boundary dispute between the English and the Americans that resulted in their joint military occupation of the island. George Gibbs, a geologist with the Northwest

Boundary Survey, made a report based on extensive notes from conversations with Griffin as well as his own observations. Henry R. Crosbie, tax assessor for Whatcom County, also described the farm in his “Assessment of Property” of May 20, 1859. At this time, Belle Vue had four sheep stations other than Home Prairie, and five or six acres cultivated at “John Bull” station. There were 4500 head of sheep, 40 cattle, 5 yokes of oxen, 40 hogs, and 35 horses. He noted that they cultivated oats and peas for forage for the sheep and cattle and potatoes for themselves.¹⁴

Where all the various places were that Company used on the island, and when they were established, is far from clear. Besides Home Prairie, the large open area near the Establishment, it is fairly evident that First Prairie was just through the woods to the north, Port L’Enfer (or “Hell’s Gate”—later modified to the present-day “Portland Fair”) was just beyond that, and Oak Prairie (possibly what is later referred to as “Grande Prairie”) was what has become known as San Juan Valley. Beyond that, the geography gets confusing: there are both a Little Mountain and a Mountain Station; New Station, Winter Station, Leroux’s Prairie, Channel Prairie, John Bull’s (which could have been Port L’Enfer), and Park Hill (which is probably the small hill of that name to the south of Friday Harbor and west of what was Bald Hill [the gravel pit]). In addition, a later document mentions “Hubbs Point”, “Frasers Farm”, “Dwyer Farm”, “Blakes Farm”, “Longacres Farm”, “Chandlers Prairie”, and “Limestone Station”.¹⁵ Some of these may refer to other, previously-named, places. “Hubbs Point” is probably (current) Cattle Point, which was claimed by the American Paul K. Hubbs, Jr. “Frasers Farm” is probably First Prairie, which was taken over by Robert Frazer. Based on the evidence of a sale recorded in an 1870s diary, “Blake’s Farm” seems to have been Little Mountain Station.¹⁶ “Chandlers Prairie” was located in the 1874 township survey of the island as the hill north of the present-day Friday Harbor Laboratories. “Limestone Station” was most likely the quarry site on the west side of the island where Lime Kiln Point State Park is. Some places still remain a mystery. Suffice it to say that the Company operations expanded until there were sheep stations and farming operations on most of the prime agricultural land of San Juan Island.

“Men & Ind^s variously employed”

Belle Vue Sheep Farm operated within the corporate culture of the Company, and their employment practices had been codified well before the establishment of the farm. Hudson’s Bay was a joint-stock company (i.e., owned by shareholders), which held a general meeting every year to elect a Governor and committee to oversee its business. Those who worked for (or were “engaged by”) the Company were called “Servants”, who were divided into “Gentlemen” (“Bourgeois” was the term that the North West Company had used) and “Labourers”. The rank-and-file was

organized in a quasi-military structure: a Chief Factor and his officers (Chief Traders) commanded each trading post, while Clerks (the equivalent of non-commissioned officers) and Labourers, Shepherds, and Voyageurs (enlisted soldiers) conducted the day-to-day work. In order to climb the ranks, a Gentleman must first apprentice for five years in order to become a Clerk. A Clerks' engagement was generally for five years, with the wage rising each year: starting at £20 per annum, £25 the second year, £30 the third, £40 the fourth, and £50 the fifth. They would then be re-engaged at £100, which could then rise to as high as £150. After 13-20 years as a Clerk, one could then be appointed a Chief Trader (or half shareholder), and then hopefully attain the highest rank, Chief Factor (full shareholder). From 1821-1872, the average wage of a Chief Factor was £720, while a Chief Trader got half that, or £360. In 1858, George Gibbs estimated that the Chief Factor (James Douglas) received US\$7,000, while the Chief Trader (Griffin) received US\$3,500 annually.¹⁷

Unfortunately, little is known about the man who was first Clerk and later Chief Trader in charge of Belle Vue Sheep Farm: Charles John Griffin. Griffin was born ca. 1827 at Limerick, Ireland and raised in Montreal ("Lower Canada"). After working as a Company apprentice at Fort Coulonge, Edmonton, and York Factory, he moved west to Fort Langley (1850-1851). With a year's duty in Babines, New Caledonia, he came back to Fort Langley for another year before arriving at Fort Victoria in 1853. Griffin came to San Juan with a re-engaged Clerk's wage of £100 from Fort Simpson (located on the Canadian coast near the Skeena River and Prince Edward's Island), where he had been Clerk at £45. By 1856, he had been in the employ of the Company for 8 years. In 1857, Griffin was appointed Chief Trader, with an accompanying rise in salary. In addition to the principal task of managing the operations of the farm, he was required, as were all heads of Company posts, to keep a journal of daily occurrences (the "*Post Journal*"), including the weather, how the servants were employed, and special events that might impact the operations (such as the arrival of boats, disturbances with Native Americans or visitors, etc.).¹⁸ After he left Belle Vue Sheep Farm on January 5, 1862, he served as Chief Trader at Red River (where he was married to Elizabeth Margaret Bird), Oxford House, and Churchill. He left Churchill with his wife on July 30, 1873 and died in Ottawa on July 22, 1874.¹⁹

In the *Post Journals*, Griffin commonly uses the phrase "Men & Ind^s variously employed". That the two groups were distinguished as such probably reflected both the cultural prejudices of the time as well as the Company's hiring practices in regard to local Indian groups. "Men" seemed to refer to a wide-ranging group of employees of European origin: Scots, Englishmen, French Canadians, Norwegians, etc. The Company had absorbed both Scottish and French Canadian employees when it merged with the Northwest Company in 1821. R. M. Ballantyne

remarked in his 1848 book *Hudson's Bay* that three quarters of the men came from the Scotch Highlands and Orkney. Several of the Belle Vue shepherds came from the Western Hebrides—the name Murdo McLeod, for instance, was common on the Isle of Lewis.²⁰ However, it is possible that the term “Men” also referred to “Metis” (“half-breeds”) and Indians from farther east (e.g., Iroquois) as well as Kanakas from the then Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). The Metis and Iroquois came from Hudson's Bay and the North West Company's territory around the Great Lakes and the Red River Valley.²¹ Hawaiians first arrived in the Northwest in 1811, when they were recruited to work at Fort Astoria. In 1831, the Company established an office in the Sandwich Islands, and actively recruited Hawaiian laborers, who were valued for their diving and swimming abilities, for the Northwest fur trade; by 1842, it was estimated that there were 500 Kanakas employed by the Company. In Hawaiian, the term “Kanaka”, although literally meaning “man”, had the social connotation of a low-status commoner, a laborer for hire. Among the half a dozen or so Kanakas employed at Belle Vue Sheep Farm was Friday, whose residence as a shepherd on the east side of San Juan eventually led to the place name of Friday Harbor.²²

“Indians”, on the other hand, seems to refer to members of regional native groups. Chief Factor McLouglin began hiring local Indians at Fort Vancouver as early as 1841, and they became particularly useful to the Company after the labor shortage resulting from the California Gold Rush of 1849. At Belle Vue Sheep Farm, local groups were used from the very beginning. In the *Post Journals*, these employees were most often named for their cultural group, such as “Chimsiams” (Tsimshians), “Cowitchins” (Cowichan), “Hyders” (Haidas), “Klalams” (Clallams), “Skatchets” (Skagits), “Sneehomish” (Snohomish) and “Songis” (Songhees). They could also be named after the Company fort or trading post nearest their place of origin, such as Burbank Bay, “Millbank” (probably Bella Bellas, from Fort McLoughlin on Campbell Island near Milbanke Sound), and Ft. Hope (probably Upriver Halkomelem on the Upper Fraser where the Fort was located).

The Company had a standard corporate procedure for hiring “Labourers”: an employee was “engaged” (*engagé*) through a contract (“paper”) for a specific period of time (one month, one year), under specific conditions of work and pay. Employees could then be “discharged” or “re-engaged”; leaving during the unexpired term of one's engagement, however, was considered “desertion”. Probably due to his French Canadian origin and the influence of the Northwest Company on Hudson's Bay, Griffin also uses the French term *congé* when referring to the firing of an employee; possibly this refers to the phrase *donner congé* (to give notice).²³ It is not clear if there was prejudicial hiring with regard to ethnicity, although the textual and comparative evidence seems to indicate that Europeans were assigned positions of relative supervision

over Indians, and the latter had shorter periods of employment. It was common for the employees to have wives, and there are several references to the Europeans having local Indian mates, as was the custom of the country and the time.²⁴

The Company-wide average annual servant's wage was £18, or about 550 US dollars (in 1976), which was calculated to cover purchase of clothing, some luxuries, and private tools and utensils, plus rations. At Belle Vue, however, the term of employment and wages varied according to position and duties. The Head Shepherd, who was engaged for a period from one to two years, received £35 per annum, while Shepherds and Labourers generally received £25 or less. Shepherds also received extra for shearing: in 1856, for instance, the two McCleods received one pound sterling per 100 fleeces. Temporary workers were also hired by the month. Younger employees, such as the sons of the Kanakas, who worked tending the flocks, were generally hired at a lower scale; Friday's son was hired in 1858 for £5 per annum and a half ration. Wages were credited to "servants accounts", and items such as clothing, blankets, and extra provisions that were obtained from Company stores (in this case, at Fort Victoria) were deducted from these accounts. In the case of damages due to negligence or malfeasance on the part of an employee, such as the incident on June 5, 1854, when the Old Man's [Page's] dog killed a sheep, a penalty was assessed on their account.²⁵

All employees—but not their families²⁶--were provided on Saturdays with weekly rations of either salt or fresh meat (beef, mutton, or pork) and flour, sugar, and tea. The *Post Journals* often record the average ration of meat: 12-15 pounds of fresh beef, mutton, or pork, or 9 pounds of salted pork. However, for other items, we must look to places like Fort Vancouver for comparison. In 1838, for instance, the weekly ration there consisted of 4 quarts peas, ½ lb. tallow, 9 lb. salmon, and 3 lb. bread or potatoes, while yearly the men received two bags of flour, sixty pounds of sugar, twelve pounds of tea, and a small quantity of wine and brandy. By 1842-1845, the weekly ration was 21 pounds of salmon and either 1 bushel of potatoes or 12 lbs. of flour per week.²⁷ For the Christmas and New Years holidays, the men were issued a "Regale" or, as Griffin calls it, "Regal": a portion and a half of their usual rations, and sometimes a pint of rum.

Both "Men & Ind^s" were indeed "variously employed". Some seemed to specialize in various trades, while others did a multitude of tasks. Several of the Englishmen, French Canadians, and Metis concentrated on the initial construction of the various structures at the Establishment, and then moved on to other posts. Others, such as the Scotsmen (the McDonalds and the McLeods) and two Norwegians, as well as the Kanakas, were hired specifically as shepherds, and were assisted by Indian men and boys or Kanaka boys. Two "Hyders" – "Bill" and "Harry" – were often assigned the job of plowing or otherwise driving the oxen. Griffin appointed someone—either a French Canadian or an

Englishman—as his second in command; this person would issue rations, handle communications with Victoria, and even, towards the end of his tenure on San Juan, write the entries in the *Post Journal*. Griffin also had a domestic servant (usually a young Indian boy), who did the cooking and general housework. For general group tasks, one of the Europeans was usually placed in charge of a mixed group of Europeans and Indians. Some Indians were sent out to fish or trade with other Indian groups for supplies.

Daily life varied little, except for the change occasioned by seasonal and extraordinary tasks. Although the *Post Journals* do not give specific times, the workday must have begun early, with a midday break for lunch, and then work into the afternoon until dusk. (By comparison, at Fort Langley the hours of work were from 6 am to 6 pm, while at Fort Vancouver a bell was rung at 5 am, with work until 8 am for a half-hour breakfast, work again until lunch [12 noon to 1 pm], and then work until 6 pm, with a half-hour break for an afternoon meal.²⁸) On some occasions, when supplies had to be loaded off a boat or animals tended, the work began earlier and went later. Everyone worked Monday through Saturday, and then took Sunday off, as indicated by Griffin's usual entry, "All quiet"—even though it often wasn't. From the frequency of recorded incidents related to drunkenness, liquor must have been a constant problem for Griffin, and drinking "sprees" often ended in shootings and sometimes murder, as well as official discharge from employment. Health problems, ranging from illnesses such as flu and venereal disease to accidents such as cuts, crushed limbs, and gunshot wounds, were duly recorded. Under more serious conditions, such as "mortification" from a wound, a surgeon was summoned from a nearby ship or the patient was sent to Fort Victoria for professional attention.

Salmon Operations

The first Company occupation of San Juan Island was for fishing purposes, as indicated above. Salmon became an important export for the Company, surpassing fur at Fort Langley by the late 1840s. It was shipped primarily to San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), although markets as far away as Australia and London were also attempted. The salmon, which was obtained by trading with the Indians, was placed in wooden barrels and packed in brine made with salt shipped as ballast from the Sandwich Islands. Each of these barrels, which contained 40 to 50 salmon and weighed 180 pounds, could fetch from \$8-14 dollars. In addition to Belle Vue, fisheries were established at Fort Hope, Nanaimo, and Fort Victoria.²⁹

One of the reasons for the establishment of the San Juan fishery was the failure of the Fraser River run in 1851.³⁰ What the precise yields were subsequent to the first season are not known, although Douglas wrote in early September of 1852 that about 290 barrels had already been put up and the catch was still in process.³¹ W. C. Macdonald

reminisced that the annual output was between two and three thousand barrels.³² According to another observer, by the mid-1850s Belle Vue fishery was producing around 300 barrels annually.³³ Catching or trading, salting down, and packing the salmon were certainly still a going concern in 1856, when Douglas wrote to Griffin:

...A cooper is now sent with Napoleon, to put up casks in order, and if the fish yield at all well, you may keep him at San Juan to put up as many fish as you can possibly cure, an additional number of casks and a quantity of salt will be sent over if required. Fish are very scarce in this quarter, and we shall be delighted if you succeed in curing 2 or 300 barrels.³⁴

Griffin mentions fishing in the *Post Journals* in late August/early September of 1858, but apparently the fish were not biting: "Let out net this morning at 9 am:- & left it until 8 pm:- in the water without the smallest success -- although salmon were jumping all round it & even over it!"³⁵ A year later, George Gibbs mentions that in former times the operation had put up 1500 to 3000 barrels a year—a tenth of which is probably more likely—although he confirms that there was no catch in 1858.³⁶ Griffin's *Post Journals* in subsequent years mention the cleaning and repair of salmon barrels and cauldrons, but no catch.³⁷

Farming Operations

Although originally occupied for the salmon trade, San Juan Island later held promise as a farming establishment. Since the establishment of Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River in 1824, the Hudson's Bay Company had a long history of farming in the Northwest, and many of the principles and practices developed there were applied at Belle Vue Sheep Farm. Furthermore, James Douglas, who was Chief Factor stationed at Fort Victoria (for which he had selected the site in 1843), had formerly been in charge of farming operations at Fort Vancouver.

Many precedents set at Fort Vancouver, which was originally located at a site named "Belle Vue", were repeated at the establishment on San Juan Island. The ultimate location of the Fort was very similar to that of Belle Vue Sheep Farm: open prairie land that had large quantities of camas, with scattered stands of Garry or white oak (*Quercus garryana*). These prairies, which were farmed, included the eponymous Fort Plain and then a series of nearby prairies linked by a road and named by proximity: First Prairie, Second Prairie, etc. And, just as the open, cultivated or grazed Hudson's Bay properties on San Juan Island were eventually squatted upon by American newcomers, an earlier precedent had been set at Fort Vancouver, which explains in part Douglas's rapid and strong reaction to events on San Juan Island.

Farming methods were also similar at both locations. Livestock were grazed on naturally-occurring (or Native American-enhanced) open spaces (prairies), although at Fort Vancouver there was some effort to

improve pasture by cultivating and then planting timothy and clover. During times of shortage, hay was cut from swamp areas, and during the winter the livestock were fed both peas and oats. Cultivated fields were kept fertile through manuring and rotation; in 1838, James Douglas said of Fort Vancouver:

The method hitherto most successfully pursued in the management of the Farm, is a rotation of grain with occasional hoe crops, keeping the soil in good heart, by fallowing and manures, the latter operation being most commonly performed by folding the cattle upon the impoverished land³⁸

At the Fort, animals such as cattle and sheep were folded in fields by means of moveable fences; at Belle Vue Sheep Farm, although there is some evidence of these fences (as opposed to the standard “park” or fixed fenced enclosure), it is not certain whether folding of this sort was practiced. Fertilizing was accomplished by hauling the manure from the barns and parks to the fields. According to James Douglas, the crops suited for the land at the Fort were, from best to worst: corn; barley or wheat; then a peas or oats rotation. The main crops on San Juan were sheep, cattle, and pigs for livestock and potatoes, oats, peas, and turnips for field crops, with an early, short-lived experiment with wheat. Corn was apparently never attempted, and there is no record of barley as a crop. Emanating from Fort Vancouver were outlying farms specializing in livestock (principally sheep) raising at Fort Nisqually (1833) and grain (principally wheat) production at Cowlitz Farm (1838); upon the completion of the trade agreement with the Russian American company and the establishment of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company in 1839, these farms grew in importance. It was from Nisqually that the original shipment of stock—composed primarily of sheep—came to Belle Vue.

The number of sheep grew rapidly from the initial 1,369. By January 1857, Chief Factor James Douglas could report to his directors that there were 4,250 sheep; two years later both George Gibbs and the tax assessors for Whatcom County numbered Griffin’s sheep at 4,000.³⁹ This seems to be the maximum number achieved, and with dwindling pasturage due to squatting on Company claimed land, the numbers probably fell by the early 1860s. Like the other Company farms at Cowlitz, Nisqually, and Vancouver, the principal breeds included Cheviot, Leicester, and Southdown, although Griffin also records some Merino, used as at the Fort to improve the quality of the wool.

Sheep operations varied little from year to year. Rams were introduced to the ewes for breeding, at a ratio of about one to thirty-five, in late October or early November. Lambing would then begin around the end of March and continue through April. In April and May those male lambs that were not kept as rams would be castrated (and thus become wethers, or, as Griffin writes, “wedders”). In May and June, the

shepherds would then wash and shear the sheep flock by flock: the wethers, young ewes, the old ewes, the rams, etc. After shearing, the sheep would then be dipped in a solution of tobacco boiled in water to prevent parasites.⁴⁰ In July and August, the lambs would be separated from their mothers (weaned), and then the cycle would begin again in the winter.

That the sheep operation was of primary interest to the Company is evident from a letter from Douglas to Griffin in 1856, which indicates the concern he felt for the proper management of the flocks:

I am glad to observe that you are making arrangements to part the ewes into flocks of 600 each; that is even too large a number to remain together, careful breeders generally making 500 the limit of their ewe flocks. In the lambing season, care must be taken to part the young lambs that have come during the night every morning from the flock, and to keep them apart until they are strong enough to range for themselves; shear each flock of ewes, within the lambing season, before then subdivided into two flocks each, so that you will require an additional number of hands to look after them, but the extra expense will be largely repaid by the increased number of lambs reared. The rams require much care and attention. The disease you describe as prevalent among those at San Juan is purely the effect of hardship and privation; if well fed and kept dry, the scab will soon disappear from among them; they should now receive a feed of oats daily, until they have perfectly recovered, and be well rubbed with a decoction of tobacco juice. I have spoken to McLeod about these matters; as a good shepherd ought to be well acquainted with them.⁴¹

Douglas continued to offer pointers as to the raising of the sheep and to respond to the various questions posed by Griffin.

In addition to the intrinsic difficulties associated with raising sheep, Griffin's shepherds also had to contend with both natural and human challenges. Several dozen sheep died as a result of poisoning, which Griffin conjectures was from the consumption of some herb located in a swamp near First Prairie.⁴² (Griffin carefully performed necropsies on all of his animals that were not deliberately slaughtered in order to determine cause of death, and his anatomical descriptions are both graphic and precise.) Wolves were a continuing menace, and although eventually extirpated from the island through trapping (some of which Griffin records), they were killing sheep as late as December of 1859.⁴³ And then there were human predators. Forty sheep were seized as a result of the tax 'sale' by Whatcom County Sheriff Ellis Barnes on March 30, 1855, and smaller numbers were shot or stolen (in his accounts, Griffin attributes a total of 400 lost to Americans). Apparently Haidas raided Friday's sheep station several times, stealing livestock.⁴⁴

There were several products from the sheep operation. After shearing, the wool was packed and shipped off, presumably to the Company headquarters at Fort Victoria (for instance, on 2/9/1860 50 bales of wool were shipped). Sheep were periodically sold off as both breeding stock (for instance, on 7/11/1859 Griffin sold 25 Black Face South Downs to some Americans), and meat (there are numerous entries concerning shipments to the other Company farms, Victoria, and the Royal Marines at English Camp).

The farm also had other livestock: horses and oxen, cattle, and pigs. The horses and oxen, although bred for reproduction, were principally used for transportation, hauling, and plowing. The cattle stock from Nisqually were probably descendants of California animals that were herded or shipped to Fort Vancouver. What methods, if any, were used in the husbandry of these animals is not known, although there are some references to cattle and horses being periodically rounded up from various locales on the island, and both a “calf park” and stables for horses are mentioned.⁴⁵ That they were pastured at Home Prairie is evident from a letter of August 5, 1859 from Chief Factor Dallas to Governor Douglas about the damage sustained at Belle Vue upon the arrival of the American troops and establishment of their nearby camp: “Our sheep, cattle and horses are disturbed in their pasturage, and driven from the drinking springs, in the vicinity of which the troops are encamped. (Much of the pasture is also destroyed).”⁴⁶ There is also an obscure reference in the *Post Journals* to foals, again presumably loose on Home Prairie, being killed by US Army mules.⁴⁷ The cattle were bred and raised for both meat and milk. Beef was a common ingredient of the men’s weekly rations. In 1858, a “new” dairy was constructed, and the following spring Griffin noted with pride that there were 12 milch cows under the care of Alexander (“Aleck:”) McDonald. There are some entries suggesting sale of butter to Victoria.⁴⁸

The Company probably first introduced native pigs from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) to Fort George in the 1820s; later, Berkshire boars were imported from England as an improved stock. At Fort Vancouver, Kanakas were usually used as swineherds. Although there is no direct mention in the *Post Journals*, this was most probably the case at Belle Vue, because of the large number of Kanaka shepherds. There is mention of at least one pig sty, although where it was is not known.⁴⁹ The pigs were slaughtered and the pork served, either fresh or salted, as rations for the men, and possibly for export. There is no record of the manner in which pigs were kept or if there were any problems with poisonous weeds (such as death camas, which had occurred earlier at Fort Vancouver). As for human predators, aside from the incident in which Lyman Cutlar shot a boar, there are notations in the *Post Journals* of sows found killed around the island.⁵⁰

Several plant crops were grown on the farm. The largest field near the Establishment—40 to 80 acres, depending on the year and the

observer—was sown in oats, principally for fodder for the livestock. The smaller field was sown in turnips and peas as well as other grain crops such as barley and wheat. Oats and peas were also planted out at Port L'Enfer and Little Mountain. Douglas wrote to Griffin on the 15th February 1859:

Your plough is being repaired by the blacksmith and a new iron plough besides is sent which it is hoped will enable you to get on with your farming operations. It would be very advisable to get as much crop in the ground as you possibly can both grain and green crops so that you may have abundance offered for your stock ensuing winter, if you cannot procure natural grass in your swamps for hay, you might obtain this very necessary article by sowing a quantity of oats and having it cut when green, and cured, it would make good hay and not very expensive should the soil be such that the oats would grow pretty rank...⁵¹

The *Post Journals* record the feeding of pea straw to sheep and cutting up turnips to feed to the oxen. In addition, on several occasions the men cut hay in swamps near Port L'Enfer to feed to the calves.⁵²

While it is known that the oats, peas, and turnips were used for livestock, it is not clear to what extent flours or other products were made from the grain crops. Douglas had written to Griffin on July 5th, 1856, "I hope the wheat crops will turn out as productive as you at present anticipate". The following year, wheat was sent to Fort Victoria, where it was ground and then sent back to Belle Vue for consumption.⁵³ There is a record of wheat being threshed 3/15/1858, but it is not mentioned again. James Douglas estimated that the average yield per acre of good land at Fort Vancouver was 20 bushels of wheat, 30 of peas, 50 of oats, and 40 of barley; on poor soils, he reckoned half these amounts.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the Belle Vue Sheep Farm *Post Journals* do not yield enough data to compare with these figures.

Some potatoes that had been sent to Victoria in 1857 for a trial in the mess "excited general admiration", according to Douglas.⁵⁵ A large field of potatoes—the seed stock having been obtained from the Cowichans⁵⁶--was planted every year thereafter. The crop was substantial: in 1858, 1,497 bushels were harvested; 800 in 1859 (as well as 700 turnips); and 1,157 in 1860. Although it can be assumed that a generous portion of these were sent to Victoria and other Company outposts, the only known record is from the *Post Journal* of April 1859, when 300 bags for potatoes were sent from Fort Langley, and at least 197 returned full.⁵⁷

Griffin's kitchen garden included beets, cabbage, celery, lettuce, onions, and parsnips, in addition to small amounts of some of the other crops mentioned. A Fort Vancouver seed list dating from 1831 mentions several other vegetables—broccoli, cucumber, kale, leek, mustard, parsley, and radish—but it is not known whether these were also grown

at Belle Vue.⁵⁸ Griffin mentions both fencing and pruning fruit trees, but species and varieties are not indicated. Apparently, he would often proudly show off his flowerbeds to visitors.

Because of the weather and crop characteristics, the cyclical farm year did not vary much. Plowing could commence as early as November, but began in earnest after the first of the year and continued through March. Depending on the wetness of the soil, horses were first used, and then oxen. In March and April peas and oats were sown, while cabbage and lettuce seeds were planted, presumably in cold frames of some sort. Drills were plowed for potatoes in April, and seed potatoes cut up and sown, as were beets, carrots, and parsnips. Cabbages and celery were transplanted in May, and although no mention is made in the *Post Journals*, lettuce probably followed soon thereafter. Weeding, either through cross-plowing or hoeing, continued throughout the spring and summer. In August, cradles were prepared and the oats and peas were cut and harvested into the barn or granary. Seeds were also collecting at this time. In September, potatoes, then turnips, were dug and hauled to root houses. In September and October carrots were dug and onions gathered. Presumably root crops, such as beets, as well as other kitchen garden vegetables, were harvested throughout the late summer and early fall, although Griffin does record digging parsnips as late as December one year. During the winter months of October through February, the grain crops were threshed and the potatoes and turnips were cleaned under the shelter of the barns, granaries, and root houses.

Also during the winter months, farm operations and repairs that had been put off during the growing season were dispatched. Barnyards were cleaned and the manure hauled off to the fields. Drains were installed around the establishment, particularly in vicinity of the underground root houses (“pits”). (During the first winter—1854—it rained so much that the pits were flooded, and Griffin and his men were forced to move the potatoes to underneath one of the men’s houses in order to keep them dry and free from frost.) The various structures such as the barns, granaries, and root houses, were repaired, replaced, or expanded, and fences repaired and heightened, particularly after strong windstorms.

Overall taking of inventory occurred in October or November. This involved rounding up all of the animals that were freely ranged on the island and taking count of these--“Aleck:- Angus & “Little Man” out collecting cattle, horses &c. to be seen & counted & put in inventory” (October 17, 1859)--as well as the more carefully herded animals, such as the sheep. Accounts were then drawn up of all of the property—both real and livestock—and this was then sent by canoe to Victoria.

Siting, Layout, Design, and Construction of Buildings

There are no extant structures at the site of Belle Vue Sheep Farm. Despite written descriptions and historic maps and photographs of the

buildings, as well as archaeological investigations at the site, there is still a lot to understand in terms of the layout of the compound and its nearby outbuildings. However, given the historical and archaeological material available, combined with comparisons with the descriptions of other Company forts and farms, a general idea of the layout, design, and construction of the buildings at Belle Vue can be formulated.

The layout of Company forts had become standardized by the 1850s. These were large compounds surrounded by tall (8' high) picket fences, with bastions in opposing corners. The chief factor or trader's house occupied a position of prominence, usually facing the main gate to the fortress (to the south or principal approach by road or water), with the kitchen nearby. Men's dwellings occupied the east side of the compound, while more utilitarian structures, such as workshops, were to the west. Unfortunately, the literature on smaller outposts is not as extensive as that on the larger Pacific Northwest forts such as Nisqually, Vancouver, and Victoria.

In the case of Belle Vue Sheep Farm, the compound was formed by eight or so structures arranged around an open rectangle and separated from each other as a precaution against fire, as in other Company establishments.⁵⁹ Griffin's house—the residence and office of the clerk and later chief trader--probably occupied either the south side or the northeast corner—the most prominent (uphill) site. From archaeological evidence, it is apparent that a triplex was located in the middle of the east side. This fits a type—three unconnected rooms in a line--that was common among various Company posts, and in the more important locations, was used for “officer's barracks” that housed “officers, clerks, and transient visitors of officer or clerk rank”. However, although Belle Vue was visited by numerous higher-ranking Company officials, this structure could have been used as a “men's house”, i.e., for laborers.⁶⁰ The kitchen, which was identified by means of its large (6½ by 4¾ feet), centrally-located chimney, was situated directly to the south of the triplex. Both of these buildings had counterparts at forts Colville and Nisqually, among others.⁶¹ The buildings forming the west and north sides of the compound were probably either men's houses or storage structures. In general, the dimensions of the buildings ranged from 18-22 feet by 20-29 feet, and their area averaged around 400 square feet, which compares favorably with evidence from other Company posts. The well, which was lined with squared posts, was located in the center of the compound, while the flagpole was erected some 100 feet or so to the south.⁶²

Most of the routine landings from Victoria occurred at what is now named Grandma's Cove, so a shed for Griffin's canoe was probably located there, as well as one or several Indian structures sited above the slope from that. To the east of the compound was the main farm building complex, consisting of at least one or two barns, a sheep shed, and a granary (see below). Written records indicate the construction of a

70- or 80-foot barn (which, based on data from other Company posts, was probably 18-21 feet wide), and one of the historic photographs reveals that it had an English plan (i.e. side-entrance drive-through).⁶³ Probably located in the fields themselves were at least two cellars or “pits” for carrots, potatoes, and turnips (also called “root houses”).

In addition to these buildings, there were other structures described in the *Post Journals* that are less easily situated. These include a shed for shearing, hen house, dairy, granary, pig sty, and horse stable—all probably located in the farm complex near the barn--and Griffin’s privy (although there is no specific mention of others). At each of the outlying “stations” the men built a house and dug a well, as well as constructing a standing park for the livestock. The old fishery house was probably located somewhere on the west coast of the island; in 1858, a road from “Prairie” to the fishery was constructed and a “stage” for shipping sheep was erected there. The same year, a temporary “slip” or wharf was built at the “Harbor”; this would later be expanded to form the wharf on Griffin Bay. Finally, there were several road structures including at least four bridges (one at the “washing place” [also known as Holland’s Bridge]; one across the “Riviere Castor”; one “above” Holland’s Bridge; and one across the swamp in Norwegian Road) and a section of corduroy road, consisting of logs laid side-by-side over damp or wet ground, in a corner of the large field.

The Company brought with them the men and their building techniques that they had acquired when working around Hudson’s Bay and the Red River Valley. The general French Canadian term for log construction was *pièce sur pièce* (simplified from *pièces de bois sur pièces de bois*--pieces of wood on pieces of wood). More specifically, structures that consisted of vertically-grooved posts filled with planks or squared logs was called *poteaux et pièce collisante* (posts and sliding piece), and the posts themselves were placed on sills (*poteaux sur sole*), as opposed to another method in which the posts were set in the ground (*poteaux en terre*). With its dissemination into the Red River Valley by French Canadian voyageurs, *pièce sur pièce poteaux et pièce collisante* took on the name of Red River Style. After the absorption of the Red River-based Northwest Company by the Hudson’s Bay Company, the style soon became known as “Hudson’s Bay Company frame” where it was used throughout the West (so much so that it is also commonly referred to as the “Canadian” style).⁶⁴

Although logs were used in this style of construction, they were hewn to 6 or 7 inches square before use. A sill (*sole*) was either placed upon the ground or supported by rocks or cedar stumps. Fitted into this by means of mortise and tenon were corner and intermediary squared posts, which had a mortise of about 2” wide and 3-4” deep running their full lengths. Into these grooves, shorter logs with ends formed into tenons or tongues were slipped down horizontally from above, forming

solid wall panels. Openings such as doorways were framed by vertical posts on either side. On the middle of the gable ends of the structures, a vertical post would rise to the full height of the gable, in order to carry the ridge beam, from which rafters were sloped to a plate on top of the side wall panels and posts. Cracks between the logs were chinked with cotton, moss, or mud. Floors usually consisted of either smaller logs hewn flat or planks. Doors were constructed of planks or slabs and windows, where glass was available, consisted of sash with 8"- to 9"-square panes. Chimneys were constructed of brick hearths and stone flues, mortared with lime manufactured from clamshells as well as mud. Finally, the *Post Journals* suggest that the buildings were periodically whitewashed with lime.⁶⁵

A clear example of this type of construction emerges from the descriptions of erecting a granary in the entries of Griffin's *Post Journal* during spring and summer of 1858. In April, Robillard, George, and Leroux began cutting and laying "sole blocks" for framing. They continued with cutting and squaring the lower beams and then grooving the posts. In May, the men started cutting and squaring the "filling-up" logs, i.e. the horizontal panel pieces. By early June they had begun work on the loft and doors. Apparently they were only able to complete a temporary roof that summer, for in April of the next year, they began re-roofing, and in May they put ½" cedar boards to the gable ends. As late as August, steps were added. (By comparison, it took two months for the granary at Fort Nisqually to be built by three experienced carpenters, probably assisted by several other men. It measured 20 by 31 feet, and was 10 feet high.⁶⁶)

Simpler buildings, such as sheep sheds, would have simpler forms and different construction. The root houses, which were also called "pits", were dug into the ground, and the log roof covered with dirt or turf. More time and expense were spent on other buildings, such as Griffin's house, which received a front and back gallery or porch. It was, in fact, typical for the house of the Chief Factor or Trader ("The Big House") to have verandahs or porches--see, for example, Forts Nisqually and Vancouver. Efforts were made to make the houses as hospitable as possible, at least for those who counted. In 1859, John de Courcy, the British Magistrate on San Juan Island, wrote to the Colonial Secretary of Vancouver Island:

Will you also kindly give me your advice, as to whether I had better make this hut of mine wind[?] tight. The cold makes itself felt in these huts with[?] their longitudinal holes.⁶⁷

The *Post Journals* record that a man was subsequently assigned to put cotton and paper in his room. However, one of the complaints of two shepherds--"Old Man" Page and Murdoch McLeod--was that "their House was not fit to live in", although Griffin protested that he had done "all my power at present to make them comfortable & could do no more".⁶⁸ And then there was the ongoing maintenance and repair of many of the

houses and farm buildings. For instance, at one point the 'filling-in' logs in the side of the barn had shrunk so much as to need replacing.⁶⁹

Fences were needed throughout the operation of the farm, for keeping the sheep together at night in "parks", for corralling them for shearing, and to keep animals out of the garden and away from the well. Several types of fences were used, as evidenced by descriptions and photographs. Probably the most common was the snake, worm, or zig-zag fence, consisting of split cedar rails laid alternately to form an angle of about 120 degrees. If fences were moved nightly to spread manure, as was the practice at other Company farms, then this type of fence was the most likely candidate. Post and rail fences, which were assembled with mortise and tenons, were probably used for heavier purposes, such as confining rams or oxen. Picket fences were used to surround the smaller gardens around the compound, and willows or young firs were woven through the interstices to prevent the intrusion of chickens and other small fowl.

Although logs formed the main structures, other building materials were used for construction. Several deals of sawn plank was shipped from Fort Victoria.⁷⁰ Later, a sawpit was dug and there are several entries in the *Post Journal* suggesting its use. Bricks were also imported from Victoria, but apparently most of the chimneys were primarily made of local fieldstone, with brick used to line the hearths and construct ovens. Griffin sent out his men to old Indian villages in order to collect the shells from middens to burn for lime mortar. Gravel was hauled to the compound in order to fill the drains around the barns, sheds, and root houses. Certain locations on the island were used for the harvest of specific trees: cedar (for shingles and fences) was usually cut near the "fork in Cowitchin Road"; oak (also used for ship's knees, wagon trees, and harrow teeth) was first harvested from Oak Prairie and later Prairie du Chine as well as the north end of the island; and spruce taken from near Mt. Finlayson. Finally, tents were utilized for the initial establishment of Belle Vue, and there is evidence from the *Post Journals* that they continued to be used by shepherds at some of the stations.⁷¹

Extraordinary Events

Griffin began the entry of each day in his *Post Journal* with an observation about the weather, pertinent to the manager of a farm that also depended upon a transportation link with Victoria via an open strait. There he noted wind strength and direction; clear, cloudy, foggy or overcast skies; precipitation; and relative temperature. In addition, he recorded extraordinary weather worthy of note. For instance, in December 1858, he wrote that the winter was as harsh as the one he had experienced in 1853. In the summer of 1859, around the time of the Pig Incident, the weather was "oppressively hot", while on December 10, 1860, he woke up to ice a half inch thick. Thunder and lightning storms, a relative rarity in the San Juans today, were remarked upon at least

annually.⁷² Finally, he noted extraordinary celestial phenomena such as the Donati Comet⁷³ and the eclipse of the sun visible at sunrise⁷⁴, as well as an earthquake “felt all over the Isl^d”⁷⁵.

In addition to weather and farming operations, Griffin commented on any extraordinary events that impinged upon the workings of farm and the political situation in general. From his position on the clear prairies on the south end of the Island (Griffin records cutting down the tall trees obstructing his view in the first month of his *Post Journal*), he had visual command of both the Haro Straights to the west and north and the Straits of Juan de Fuca to the south. There are almost daily sightings of boats going to and from Victoria and through the straits. Many of these were canoes of Indians, who not only traveled the region in the course of their traditional seasonal subsistence, but also came from places farther away to be hired. Several of the early *Post Journal* entries record traditional local Indian activities--“kamass” picking and salmon fishing, in particular—while others, such as notice of smoke from large fires, hint at the controlled burning to keep meadows and prairies clear for camas and nettles. However, the vast upheaval to traditional ways of Indian life caused by the arrival and encroachment of the whites is also reflected in the large number of Indians who sought employment either on the farm or further up sound. Although this seemed to provide a means of support in troublous times, Indians periodically deserted.

Disruption to the traditional Indian way of life was clearly exacerbated through the introduction of alcohol, and many of the more violent events recorded by Griffin were precipitated or aggravated by drink. On several occasions drunken bouts lead to the fighting and ultimately death among Indian communities. In addition, traditional rivalries among various Indian groups continued. Whenever northern Indians passed through, it was duly noted. Haidas from the north were particularly feared by local Indian groups. Several days after a Haida woman was accidentally shot when she approached a remote sheep station at night and was mistaken for a wolf, most of the “Mill Banks” (Bella Bellas?) deserted to avoid Haida revenge parties. On two occasions in 1859—in May and then again in June—Haidas raided Friday’s sheep station.

Transient Indians were not the only newcomers to the area, and the advent of Americans would eventually lead to boundary changing events—the Pig War and the subsequent settlement of the international line. The arrival of Americans in the early 1850s had precipitated the decision of the Company to establish a holding on the island, and despite Griffin and other’s discouragement, they continued to arrive. Furthermore, the US government took action in the form of assessing the farm as subject to taxation on American soil, charges that eventually led to an armed confrontation over seizing sheep as part of a tax sale. The singular event that precipitated the Pig War—the shooting of a Company boar by an American squatter—merited only a single sentence (albeit

with three exclamation marks) in Griffin's entry of June 15th, 1858. But the subsequent comings and goings of the American and English troops and officials are duly noted in the *Post Journals*, and the well documented in both the contestant's correspondence.

Into The Present

By 1860, it was becoming obvious to the Company management at Victoria that Belle Vue Sheep Farm was not only no longer a going concern, but a liability. The first written indication of this is contained in a September 11th letter by A. G. Dallas to Griffin:

Upon reference to our books I find that the expenses of your establishment for last year amounted to about £1,800 exclusive of your own emoluments. To meet the expenditures of the current year, you have an increase of only about 550 lambs, & a few foals and calves of little value. I need not therefore point out to you the necessity of some reduction in your expenditures. The main items are, wages, supplies from Victoria, & expenses of transport to San Juan. I must leave it to yourself to make such retrenchments as your probably can, but I would suggest that you incur the expenses of sending a canoe to Victoria only when absolutely necessary.⁷⁶

Not only had Americans squatted upon most of the sheep runs claimed by the Company, but the employees--particularly Indians--at Belle Vue had become further demoralized by contact with the American whiskey sellers--all of which were enumerated the following day in a letter from Dallas to Thomas Fraser Esq., Secretary, Hudson's Bay House, London. Dallas recommended that the London office take the next opportunity to petition the Crown for payment for the establishment, "on the ground that the farm was established, & the island occupied solely to secure its possession to the British Crown against the Americans".⁷⁷

The operation limped along, as the growing terseness of Griffin's often morose entries bears witness. On November 11th, 1860, he laments that "Lewis is the only man I have now", and even he was discharged the following April. Soon Griffin was spending as much of his time visiting the Royal Marines and their officers at the English Camp as he could. Starting July 14th, as evidenced by a change of hand as well as the grammatical context, even the task of journal writing is taken over by another. Finally, on January 5th 1862, the *Post Journal* breaks off abruptly.

Belle Vue Sheep Farm was subsequently put under the charge of Robert Firth (1831-1901), a native of Scotland who was listed as a shepherd in the Company records. Firth was born in Kirkwall on Pomona, the largest of the Orkney Islands. When he was 19, he went to Edinburgh to become engaged in the Hudson's Bay Company. On May 12, 1851, he arrived in Victoria, where he farmed at Fern Hill. In 1857,

he requested a leave of absence to return to Scotland to marry Jessie Grant (1830-1889), returning with her the next year. (They would eventually have nine children, two of whom were born in Victoria and the rest at Belle Vue.) Firth arrived on San Juan Island on January 7, 1862 to assume management of the farm. In the spring of 1864, the Company leased the farm to him for three years, and subsequent leases ran up to the year 1873—coincident with the 1872 decision for the United States in regard to the possession of the Islands. Firth became an American citizen on February 5, 1878, and applied for and was awarded two land patents: a cash sale of 40 acres in 1880 and a homestead entry of 186.1 acres in 1884.⁷⁸

Robert Firth kept diaries, and the years 1865 and 1866 are extant. Written in a nice hand with often unconventional spelling, the entries record his continuation of many of the farming practices of his predecessor. He mentions both the little and big fields, which he planted in oats, peas, and potatoes. Place names such Sheep Station, New Station, Chandler's Prairie, and Bald Hill indicate that Firth was still using many of the original Belle Vue Sheep Farm pastures and stations. However, the introduction of a growing number of new names of American settlers—Fleming, Hannah, Hubbs—as well as San Juan Town—the rough grouping of stores, bars, and brothels that serviced the soldiers of American Camp—indicates the future outcome in the settlement of San Juan Island.⁷⁹

After his wife Jessie died in 1889, Firth rented the farm to his son, Robert Jr., and lived in the American officer's quarters ('Pickett's House') with his youngest daughter, Mary Jane (Maimie). One of his grandchildren recollected that Belle Vue at that time consisted of "a number of log houses in a hollow square with quite an orchard in the center".⁸⁰ Eventually, the buildings were used for storage of equipment as well as hay and other crops. In October 1927, Mary Jane and her husband Joe LaChapelle sold the farm to Robert McRae for \$13,000. The property included 160 acres along with all the livestock and farm equipment.

The first official recognition of the historical importance of the Pig War and ultimately the role of the Hudson's Bay Company in the boundary dispute came with the dedication of two stone monuments at American and English camps on October 21, 1904. In the 1930s, the National Park Service explored the possibility of establishing a National Recreation Area in the San Juans; however, actual acquisition of land did not begin until 1951, when the State of Washington purchased 5 acres around American Camp from Robert and Lillie McRae. Eight years later, the National Park Service surveyed both camps as part of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, and the sites were approved as National Historic Landmarks. Following a subsequent push by island residents and their national representatives and senators, Congress approved the establishment of the San Juan National Historical

Park in September 1966. Land acquisition included the core area (“The Establishment”) of Belle Vue Sheep Farm as well as Home Prairie, Grandma’s Cove, the site of the wharf on Griffin Bay, and other farmland on Mount Finlayson.⁸¹

By the time the site was purchased, all of the Hudson’s Bay Company buildings had either been removed or fallen into ruin. Park Superintendent Carl Stoddard documented surface remains of one of the Establishment structures through measured drawings.⁸² During the 1970s, Roderick Sprague and a team of archaeologists from the University of Idaho spent several seasons excavating the remains at American Camp and Belle Vue Sheep Farm; the results of their investigations are published in San Juan Archaeology (edited by Roderick Sprague, Moscow: University of Idaho Laboratory of Anthropology 1983). Artifacts from the excavations are located at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. Today the site is administered and interpreted by the National Park Service as a vital historical component of the San Juan Island National Historical Park.

¹ Robert H. Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the San Juan Islands, San Juan County, Washington, Water Supply Bulletin No. 46, Department of Ecology, State of Washington, 1975.

² Fred E. Schlots et al, Soil Survey of San Juan County, Washington, United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1962.

³ Earl L. Phillips, Washington Climate for these Counties: Clallam, Jefferson, Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom, Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture, Washington State University, Pullman, 1966; William E. Dietrich, “Surface Water Resources of San Juan County” IN Russell 1975, 59-76.

⁴ James K. Agee, Historic Landscapes of San Juan Island National Historical Park, National Park Service, 1984.

⁵ Wayne Suttles, The Economic Life of the Coast Salish of Haro and Rosario Straits. New York: Garland Publishing, 1974; Wayne Suttles, “Central Coast Salish” IN Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast, edited by Wayne Suttles (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990); Suttles Fishery study; Daniel L. Boxberger, San Juan Island Cultural Affiliation Study. National Park Service, 1994; Julie Stein, Exploring Coast Salish Prehistory, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000

⁶ Hartwell Bowsfield, ed., Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851 (Winnipeg: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1979), p.193. The Governor and Committee not only approved of the fishery, but said “it always affords us great satisfaction to learn that exertions are made to explore and turn to account the resources of the Colony”.

⁷ William John Macdonald, “Notes by a Pioneer”, MS, PABC.

⁸ William John Macdonald, “Notes by a Pioneer”, MS, PABC.

⁹ James Douglas to Archibald Barclay, 27 December 1853.

¹⁰ Evidence from the Post Journals suggests that the shepherds continued to use tents—probably wedge tents, although possibly tipis—well into winter of 1854 (3 October). For more information on fur trade tents, see A. Gottfred, “Some Notes on the Tents of the Northwest Fur Trade,” Northwest Journal IV (www.northwestjournal.ca/VI4.htm).

¹¹ Belle Vue Sheep Farm Account Book, 1853-1858, HBC.

¹² Post Journal 4/10, 9/18 and 11/17/1854; 3/15, 6/22, 8/31, 9/16, and 11/8/1858.

¹³ “The Census of Vancouver Island, 1855”, The British Columbia Historical Quarterly 4(1):51-58.

¹⁴ Report of George Gibbs, Geologist, of an Examination of San Juan Island and of the Cowitchin Archipelago and Channel [Addressed to Archibald Campbell, Esq., U. S. Comm. N. W. Boundary Survey, March 18, 1859], NA, RG 76, NW Boundary Survey; Henry Crosbie, “Assessment of Property”, May 20, 1859, NA, RG 76, NW Boundary Survey.

¹⁵ W. F. Tolmie to HBC London, 11 November 1867.

¹⁶ Thomas Fleming bought the Blake Farm near Little Mountain in 1867.

¹⁷ Box 4 File 95 [Grades and Ranks], John Hussey Archives, Fort Vancouver; Report of George Gibbs, Geologist, of an Examination of San Juan Island and of the Cowitchin Archipelago and Channel [Addressed to Archibald Campbell, Esq., U. S. Comm. N. W. Boundary Survey, March 18, 1859].

¹⁸ Patricia C. Erigero, Cultural Landscape Report: Fort Vancouver National Historic Site Volume II [Seattle: National Park Service, 1992:63.

¹⁹ Hudson’s Bay Company, Fort Victoria, Servant’s Accounts (B226).

²⁰ Dugald MacTavish said that their terms of employment were: “Laboring people engaged in the Orkney Islands or the Island of Lewis, five years and free passage” (quoted in, Erigero 1992:65)).

²¹ Again, MacTavish states: “Canadians three years sent into the northwest by canoes from Montreal; [R]ed [R]iver 3 years from there to Norway House by boats” (Erigero 1992:65).

²² Mactavish: “Sandwich Islanders 3 years, coming and going at Co expense”; E. Momilani Naughton, “Hawaiians in the Fur Trade: Cultural Influence on the Northwest Coast, 1811-1875”, MA thesis, Western Washington University, 1983; Tom Koppel, Kanaka: The Untold Story of Hawaiian Pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest (North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Whitecap Books Ltd, 1995); Brenda C. Pratt, “Thank God It’s (Still) Friday”, *San Juan Museum Newsletter*, 2003.

²³ Post Journal 6/21/1854.

²⁴ There have been several excellent studies on the role of Native American wives in the society and function of both the North West and Hudson’s Bay companies: Jennifer Brown, Strangers in Blood, Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country. Vancouver:

University of British Columbia Press, 1980; John C. Jackson, Children of the Fur Trade: Forgotten Metis of the Pacific Northwest (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1995); and Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870 (Winnipeg, MB, Canada: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, 1999).

²⁵ Box 4 File 97 [Wages], John Hussey Archives, Fort Vancouver; Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Victoria, Servant's Accounts (B226).

²⁶ In a letter dated 31 March 1856, Douglas wrote to Griffin: "I have duly weighted your remarks in regards to providing Servants with food for their families, and admit their force, but there are reasons equally cogent against the practice. At an inland Post supported on the resources of the country the expense is trifling, but at this place where we have to import Provisions at a very serious expense, the business would not repay the cost. A man like Ferron might easily salt 3 or 4 barrels of salmon at San Juan in the proper season, and cultivate a patch of potatoes, for the support of his family, and every facility and assistance should be given him in breaking up the land, and you might also furnish him with barrels for the salmon he may cure. By that means he might keep his family in comfort. I will talk the matter over with him quietly & endeavor to prevail upon him to return to you."

²⁷ Chief Factors, in keeping with their higher salaries, received: 300 lbs. flour, 336 lbs. sugar, 18 lbs. black tea, 9 lbs. green tea, 42 lbs. raisins, 60 lbs. butter, 30 lbs. candles, 3 lbs. mustard, 16 gallons port, sherry and brandy. Chief Traders, in turn, received half this, while Clerks got half of the Chief Traders' amounts (Box 4 File 100 [Rations], John Hussey Archives, Fort Vancouver).

²⁸ Box 4 File 100 [Rations], John Hussey Archives, Fort Vancouver.

²⁹ Mackie 1984:28-39.

³⁰ Margaret A. Ormsby, "Introduction" to Bowsfield 1979, p. xxxi.

³¹ Douglas to Barclay, 9 September 1852, HBCA B.226/b/6.

³² Macdonald, "Notes by a Pioneer", MS, PABC.

³³ Grant, Description of Vancouver Island, p.282.

³⁴ Douglas to Griffin, 8 August 1856.

³⁵ Post Journal 9/1/1858.

³⁶ Report of George Gibbs, Geologist, of an Examination of San Juan Island and of the Cowitchin Archipelago and Channel [Addressed to Archibald Campbell, Esq., U. S. Comm. N. W. Boundary Survey, March 18, 1859].

³⁷ Post Journal, 9/2/1859 and 7/12/1860.

³⁸ Quoted in John Hussey, "The Fort Vancouver Farm", MS on file, Fort Vancouver, p.160.

³⁹ Report of George Gibbs, Geologist, of an Examination of San Juan Island and of the Cowitchin Archipelago and Channel [Addressed to Archibald Campbell, Esq., U. S. Comm. N. W. Boundary Survey, March 18, 1859].

⁴⁰ George B. Roberts, stationed at Fort Vancouver, wrote that the formula for this preparation was “32 tobacco in decoction 2-1/2 oz. corrosive sublimate per salmon Barrel of water” (“The Round Hand of George B. Roberts, Oregon Historical Quarterly LXIII [1962], pp. 126,127).

⁴¹ Douglas to Griffin, 5 July 1856.

⁴² Post Journal, 6/7, 6/17, 8/7, 8/24, 12/1, and 12/10/1854.

⁴³ In the October 10th entry to his 1860 Diary, Anglican Bishop George Hills described a wolf trap on San Juan, “formed by a horse shoe of stakes firmly driven into the ground, the front open. On the top of a huge block, below, the bait of a piece of sheep. The wolf comes in, begins to eat, moves a prop & brings down the stone which crushes him.” Bagshaw 1996:243. Wolves are mentioned in the Post Journal 5/20, 5/30, 6/17, 9/17, 10/2 & 3 [setting traps and catching a she wolf], 12/1 and 12/8/1854; 11/15/1858; and 3/16 and 12/27/1859. In the Geographical Memoirs of the US Boundary Expedition, the surveying party used strychnine-baited meat in an attempt to kill wolves on Lopez (??); apparently this same poison was used at Fort Nisqually and probably Fort Vancouver (Erigero 1992:80).

⁴⁴ Post Journal 5/20 and 11/24/1859.

⁴⁵ Post Journal 2/10/1859; 10/15/1860. McLoughlin, at Fort Vancouver, mentioned that the cattle were as wild as deer, and “could not be approached so that when we wanted to kill any for Beef we had to hunt them as Deer” (quoted in Hussey, Farm, 170).

⁴⁶ Quoted in Miller 1943:68.

⁴⁷ Post Journal 5/8/1861.

⁴⁸ Post Journal 4/11 and 6/16/1859.

⁴⁹ Post Journal 9/13/1859.

⁵⁰ Erigero 1992:29,87-88; Post Journal 5/8/1861.

⁵¹ Douglas to Griffin 15 February 1859

⁵² Post Journals, 2/16/1858; 4/15 and 6/22/1858; 2/5/1860

⁵³ Douglas to Griffin, 15 June 1857, PABC.

⁵⁴ Erigero 1992:146.

⁵⁵ Douglas to Griffin, 24 September 1857, PABC.

⁵⁶ Post Journal, 4/9&13/1858.

⁵⁷ Post Journal, 4/6&15/1859.

⁵⁸ Erigero 1992:355.

⁵⁹ Extensive fires during the 1840s at both forts Langley (1840) and Vancouver (1844) drove home this lesson; later conflagrations were contained by means of isolating the structure on fire.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of this, see Roderick Sprague (editor), San Juan Archaeology Volume 1 (Moscow: University of Idaho Laboratory of Anthropology, 1983), p. 344.

⁶¹ See Chance 1972:41 and Steven A. Anderson, *The Physical Structure of Fort Nisqually* (Tacoma: Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma, 1988), pp. 24-30 and 36-40; the latter contains tables of comparative sizes of similar structures at other posts.

⁶² Mary P. Rossillon, "Bellevue Farm Feature Descriptions, Artifact Analysis, and Possible Structure Functions" IN *San Juan Archaeology* (edited by Roderick Sprague), Moscow: University of Idaho Laboratory of Anthropology 1983, pp 315-356.

⁶³ "A barn of 70 or 80 feet will certainly be required, and I would recommend your getting the wood squared and hauled and as opportunities offer and I will serve you aid from this place to get it created, and also a few Indians to make shingles on the spot for roofing it." Douglas to Griffin 12 November 1856. There were seven barns at Mill Plain at Fort Vancouver, all of which were 18-21 feet wide except one (32 feet); at Cowlitz, there were 13 barns of 20 by 105 feet and one "close barn" of 25 by 80 (Hussey Farm 150; Erigero 1982:187-188).

⁶⁴ Marius Barbeau, "The House That Mac Built", *The Beaver* Dec 1945:10-13; Harold Kalman, A History of Canadian Architecture (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), Volume 1, pp. 323-328; Peter N. Moogk, Building a House in New France (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977); Jill Wade, "Log Construction at Red River", *Canadian Antiques Collector* 6 [Nov/Dec 1971]:36-38; William C. Wonders, "Log Dwellings in Canadian Folk Architecture", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69(2) [1979]:196-7,205.

⁶⁵ Post Journals 8/30/1854, 7/28/1858.

⁶⁶ Fort Nisqually Report, 90-92.

⁶⁷ De Courcy to Young, 11 April 1859, PABC SAJU 1859 Correspondence, quoted in Erwin N. Thompson *Historic Resource Study San Juan Island National Historical Park* (Seattle: National Park Service 1972), p. 171. Thompson rightly points out that because De Courcy didn't arrive until July of that year, the date cannot be correct; however, the Journal entry concerning the improvements to his room are dated 11/11/1859, when presumably the cold would have begun to be felt. The phrase "longitudinal" (i.e., vertical), which Thompson takes to be "characteristic of the Canadian style of architecture", is a bit puzzling: if, indeed, the hut he was inhabiting was standard Company construction, the "holes" (chinks or cracks) would have been 'latitudinal' (horizontal).

⁶⁸ Post Journal 10/23/1854.

⁶⁹ The barn was repaired 6/18/1858.

⁷⁰ A “deal” was a standard-sized plank 2 ½” by 11” by 12 feet; Douglas to Griffin 11 March 1857 (Fort Victoria Corr. Out 1856-1858 PABC).

⁷¹ For tents, see footnote 10.

⁷² Post Journals 8/27/1854; 8/22/1858; 6/9/1859; 7/16, 7/23, and 10/16/1860; and 5/27/1861.

⁷³ Post Journals 9/29 and 10/1/1858. This comet, named after Giovanni Battista Donati, was first reported by him on June 20, 1858, and subsequently viewed throughout the world. With a triple tail that reached almost half the distance from horizon to zenith, it was the first comet to have been photographed (http://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/great_comets.html).

⁷⁴ Post Journals, 7/18/1860.

⁷⁵ Post Journals, 6/23/1859; the tremor was actually felt the evening before, around 5 and 6 PM.

⁷⁶ Dallas to Griffin, 11 September 1860.

⁷⁷ Dallas to Fraser, 12 September 1860.

⁷⁸ Several of the Firth children married into local families; for instance, Robert Firth, Jr., married Lila Hannah, the daughter of an American farmer on the island (Firth Family file, San Juan Historical Museum, Friday Harbor).

⁷⁹ “Diary of Robert Firth”, MS, PABC.

⁸⁰ “Inez Calhoun Shaffer”, 1960 paper in Firth Family file, San Juan Historical Museum, Friday Harbor.

⁸¹ Kelly June Cannon, Administrative History, San Juan Island National Historical Park (Seattle: National Park Service, 1977), Chapter 3.

⁸² Thompson 1972:174.