

THE DEVANEYS OF DAVIE BAY

In 1924 several abandoned logging bunkhouses on the shore of Davie Bay became home to Jack and Mary Devaney and their seven children. The Devaneys had searched the coast until finally purchasing the Crown Grant in Davie Bay.

We are fortunate that daughter Margaret, in 2002 at age 81, recorded her memories of growing up there. Hers is a remarkable story of a family working together under difficult conditions.

Father Jack soon found that he hated homesteading. He returned to Vancouver to work as a physiotherapist and support the family from there, returning to Texada for only ten days each summer.

As mother Mary was partially paralyzed the children did all the work. The older boys (aged 15 and 13) took on homesteading chores eventually clearing five acres, digging out 52 stumps and building numerous rock walls for terraced gardens.

The younger kids were entrusted with housework, cooking, laundry and care of livestock, gardens and fruit trees.

Rich soil was packed down from a swamp 3/4 miles uphill. A distant spring supplied water which the children carried in buckets down to the shore. Laundry was boiled in tubs set atop beach fires.



Used clothing sent by father, provisions from Woodward's, mail and (later) school correspondence courses were shipped to False Bay, Lasqueti Island which required the children to row the 12 miles each way, sometimes in stormy conditions.

These twice-monthly trips were their only social contact. A hand-crank gramophone and, later, a battery-powered radio provided evening entertainment. Although mother read stories aloud, young Margaret was charged with teaching her siblings to read.

Hunting and fishing were mainstays of survival and a source of income. Coho were sold to offshore Japanese buyers for 3 cents/pound. The boys also set traplines for mink, otter and raccoon pelts.

Despite the isolation Margaret says that they "had a happy life." In gumboots or bare feet the kids explored the beach ("a constant delight") and blazed trails everywhere. They learned how to fend for themselves, shoot a rifle, clean fish, handle boats, raise goats and track deer.

In mother Mary's words, "You don't need an education. You just need to be strong and healthy."

As they grew older the children sought work elsewhere leaving Davie Bay behind. The rock walls still standing remind us of this resourceful family.