

# Our Sabine Farms, Saanich Peninsula

By CLIVE PHILLIPPS WOLLEY



AN APPLE ORCHARD  
(NEW STYLE)

a kedge anchor and it has killed nobody as yet.

Peace to its memory! But if the railway is not a record-breaker, the roads of the district, except quite close to the city, leave very little to be desired. They are good enough for motors and bicycles, and that, I suppose, is the last word which can be said in praise of a road.

The district they run through, taken as a whole, is a rolling plain, broken by knolls and, where uncleared, covered with dense woods of pine, rich alder bottoms and thickets of maple and dogwood, and about the centre of it are the lakes from which Victoria draws her water supply.

But man has been busy here, for at least a quarter of a century, so that although there is still ample opportunity for young manhood to match itself against nature and earn a competence with the sweat of its brow, or buy with years of young life what old age must purchase with thousands of dollars; a very large proportion of it is tilled land, fenced and drained, dotted with substantial and, in many cases, picturesque farm buildings.

The soil is excellent, and as I propose to prove, admirably adapted to the growing of fruit and, considering its producing power, its freedom from pests, its vicinity to the capital and its social advantages, cheap. Nay, I am going further even than that. Other districts (part of the Kootenay, Kelowna and the Okanagan Valley, generally) have been splendidly advertised, by their own people, assisted by a Government, which very properly helps those who help themselves and in consequence lands in these districts command far higher prices than the Saanich lands.

This is intelligible. They are excellent lands and the produce of them is known on two continents, whilst the spirit of the people who have made them known, can only elicit our admiration, but my brief is, that the lands of the Saanich peninsula are worth more money per acre than any other lands in British Columbia.

Let us grant at once that the Saanich peninsula cannot grow certain apples (e.g., Northern Spy) to compete with those grown in the Okanagan Valley, but it can grow other varieties equally remunerative, e.g., Duchess, Wealthy and King of Tompkins, to compete with any of the same variety grown on the continent, whilst pears (Bartlett and other varieties) cherries and prunes, grow with us to perfection, which is not the case in the rival districts. Moreover, none of the other districts named would attempt to compete with us in the production of strawberries and other small fruits.

There are amongst the settlers in the Saanich peninsula some who have tried both districts, and with one of these I stayed for a chat. This gentleman had come to Saanich because he preferred our moderate climate and mild winters to the hot summers and rather severe winters of the mainland, but he pointed out that in addition to these considerations there were others.

The Saanich farms had the advantage of suburban lands in close proximity to the Capital city of the province and the great and growing market of Vancouver. For the farmers' wives the pleasure of life was increased by the facilities for shopping; the possibility of going to the theatre now and again and of meeting such of the globe-trotters as they had known in the old country. In a word, he contended, that unless a man was smitten with

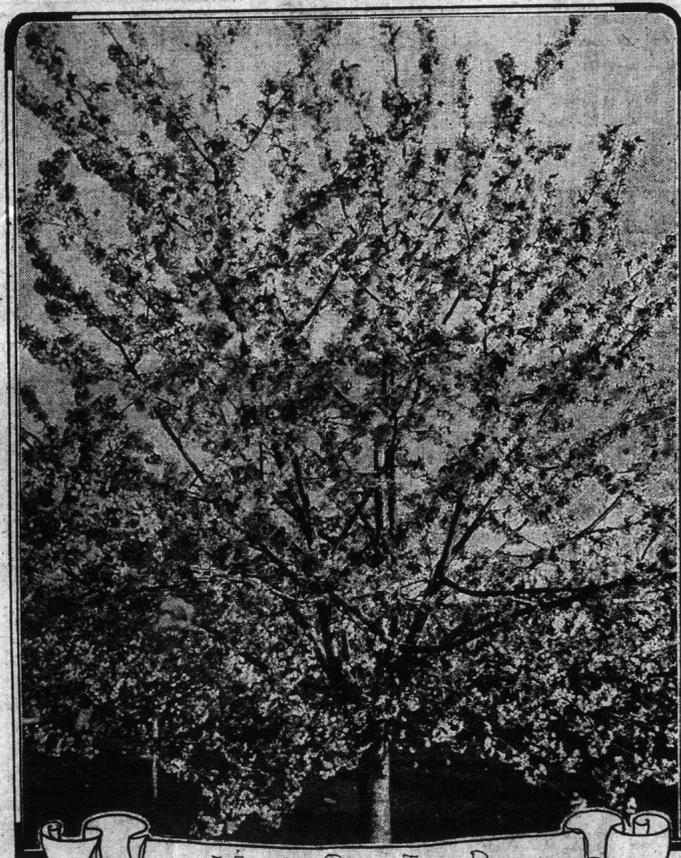
what the Germans call Amerikanismo (the desire to get gold as the one object in life), Saanich was infinitely preferable to any point on the mainland, from a purely business standpoint, Saanich has the best of it, because in Saanich irrigation was unnecessary, labor for picking more easily obtained, and the fire blight amongst pear trees absolutely unknown. But I do not propose in this sketch to depend upon the evidence of man. Rather, I will try to produce witnesses from the vegetable kingdom in proof of the climatic conditions which I allege.

I said that cherries did well in this district. There is a photograph of a single cherry tree amongst the illustrations for this article. At the old mill, North Saanich, there is another. The height of it is 24 feet, the girth 3 feet 4 inches and the spread of its boughs 31 feet. In 1907 (the only year of which I have any record) this tree supplied its owners and their friends with all the fruit they needed:

they bottled its fruit, brandied it, and made jam, and they shipped 220 pounds from it at 10 cents per pound. In the same orchard (the subsoil is what we call a deep deposit of clam shell soil) is a standard apricot, 35 feet in height and 3 feet 5 inches in girth, which is weighed down every year with fruit which ripens upon the tree; 300 pounds of fruit per annum would probably be a very conservative estimate of its output.

Alongside it is a plum tree, whose plums go from 4 to 5 to the pound. The tree stands over 20 feet, girths 4 feet and spreads over 27 feet 6 inches. In another district close to Rock Side, I saw a young cherry orchard. The trees were vulgarly, obtrusively healthy and clean, the dark greenery of them being very striking. They are three years old and they were bearing more than 10 pounds of fruit to the tree. With 75 trees to the acre and cherries at 10 cents per pound, this is not a bad showing for three-year olds.

In the same district I was shown a plum



A SAANICH CHERRY TREE IN BLOOM

tree 16 years old, which had borne in one season 400 pounds and another tree which had borne 500 pounds in one season and in a neighboring orchard a six-year-old cherry which had netted \$10 in one season.

In May from Victoria to Sidney you drive through a district where a foam of white blossom breaks on either side of the road; one in which you cannot help noticing that even the pockets of soil between the rocks have been set with fruit-bearing trees and every favorable slope ruled with lines of strawberry plants, but in addition to this there is rich and abundant pasture from which two creameries draw their wealth of golden butter, and here and there patches of rich land upon which squat little blue figures, the busy market gardening Chinese.

The land is too rich for mixed farming or rather it is too good to be used for such humdrum purposes.

Its future seems to the writer inevitable and very near at hand. It cannot long be held in large blocks. A friend who owns a splendid farm, hit the nail on the head, as he generally does: "It is a confounded nuisance," he said, "but I shan't be justified in holding on to my place much longer. It is too valuable for any one but a millionaire to retain as a plaything. I shall have to sell."

And that is true. Very few men can be justified in holding on to three hundred acres of land which, if cut up into small holdings, would afford a comfortable living to thirty thrifty families farming not by the acre, but by the foot.

Intensive farming will be the system of the future in this peninsula of rich land and sunshine, of small pleasure farms and exquisite homes for the well-to-do and of cottage homes and comfort for their working neighbors and this means happiness and well being for the many and for Victoria more real prosperity than either mines or manufactures could bring.

Even now, when we are only in an intermediate stage of development there are some instances of what a man may do with a small piece of land. My friend Jimmy, for instance, a muscular Christian, who works off the superfluous flesh with axe and spade which, in old days on the Thames he kept down with an oar, has a pretty place of twelve acres upon the sea front, which he keeps as smart and trim as a racing stable and from which he assures me that he and his boy make enough to keep him and his family (eight all told) in all that a moderate man should expect. I know that this includes a launch, boats, a good hack and a glass of good beer whenever a friend feels thirsty, and yet he says "We really only work for three or four months in the year. (Then they work hard.) And the rest of the year we fish, shoot and play." Of course, Jimmy is neither a fool nor a loafer and his boy is of the kind of which every good settler ought to have twelve.

Some years ago hops seemed likely to become the favorite crop of the district, and may yet make men's fortunes here, but for the time this industry has received a set-back, and several of the old hopyards have been ploughed up, not because hops would not do well but because the growers were not able to make a market. One or two only of the hop men, I think, still flourish, of whom the principal is Mr. Downey, and he probably owes his success to the fact that he found a special customer for his hops, and the quality of the hops retained that customer.

And now, since I am asked to set out fairly the disadvantages as well as the advantages of Saanich, I must put my finger upon some of its weak spots, and I do so the more readily, because they are all remediable, and in some cases are like weeds—only flowers out of place.

First, then, until only lately, the district has never been much advertised. This may mean, perhaps, that the people are too well off to care to sell. The best district is not that in which every farm is for sale. Then, again, the farms which everyone sees are not the most attractive. In one case the people have cut away all the timber along the coast line, so that their orchards suffer from the sea winds and in another the owners are men who, having cut farms and a competence out of the brush, have used up most of their strength and energy and think probably rightly that they may as well farm in the earliest fashion instead of converting a competence into wealth, by turning farms which they made, into gardens by intensive farming. One man ought not to be asked to play the whole game. The pioneers carved out the farms and made them fit for farming. Surely that is one man's job and the next generation may reasonably be expected to turn these farms into gardens after paying the makers for their labor.

Again, for intensive farming, there is not enough labor or cheap enough labor in the country, since rightly or wrongly, British Columbia has decreed that she will not have Chinese cheap labor.

So long as British Columbia is prepared to accept the alternative and cut up her holdings into small allotments, small enough for a man and his boys to handle to advantage, British Columbia has done well and a great population of prosperous small holders should be the result, but big farms, if you are to do justice to such land as ours, want big gangs of cheaper labor than any we have in the country. (Continued on Page Eleven.)

stood on the doorstep with baby in her arms, watching across to the barn. There was a look of despair in her eyes as she saw the men were going so much more than she had expected. Why, it did not seem more than half-way to the barn yet, and she would have been able to save the horses after

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