

# Newsletter

*"A life not documented is a life that within a generation or two will largely be lost to memory."*



## President's Message



A belated happy 2026 to all of you! Already a month into the new year, our volunteers are busy working on various projects, from researching and documenting new stories to sharing and storing those just completed. The newsletter offers examples of the wide range of work we do.

This year marks our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To celebrate this proud moment, we are planning a special event in May and hope you can join us. Mark your calendars for May 23, 2026. The event will be held at the Sea Island School. If you would like to help, please let us know. See more details in this newsletter.

Be sure to visit <https://seaislandhome.org> to see our updated website, including a new webpage about Chinese pioneers of Sea Island.

Under the leadership of our webmaster, Karen Tourangeau, volunteers work hard to ensure the information on our site is accurate and current.

We are grateful for the tremendous interest in Bill McNulty's book, *Sea Island British Columbia - The Beginning of Richmond*. Packed with historic details, it provides broader and more complete understanding of changes and accomplishments of those that lived on Sea Island. See a sample from the book about Richmond's first church later in this newsletter.

We are changing the way we host our Coffee Chats, making it easier for more people to participate online and in person, share Sea

Island experiences, and learn together. More details are in this newsletter.

February is a month focused on family. This issue celebrates the life and family of pioneer farmer and landowner MAH Bing. Recognized for his contribution to the development of Richmond, a street near Richmond Centre is named for him.

Barbara Kinahan shares two stories in this issue. One of the Thomas Mackie family and their walks to Richmond's first church on land donated by John Thomas Errington. Barbara also tells of her visits with Uncle Willie Mackie (Thomas' brother) and a special silver watch. Enjoy reading about family life in the early 1900s.

The **In Loving Memory** section of this issue holds special meaning to me. My brother, Doug Hamalock, passed unexpectedly in December and a former Cora Brown neighbour who lived across the street from my family on Myron Drive, Sharon Birch Hammell, passed in November. I hold their memories extra close.

In closing, I'd like to thank those of you who have become lifetime and annual members of the Sea Island Heritage Society. Your support is important, as it enables us to continue collecting, documenting and preserving Sea Island's heritage, creating a legacy for generations to come.

The lifetime membership is a one-time payment of \$100.00, while annual membership is \$15.00 per year.

And, if you are interested in volunteering, please consider the secretary position currently open. Please contact me for more information.

From everyone at SIHS, we offer our deep appreciation. You help bring these stories of heritage to life. We couldn't do it without you!

*Eunice Robinson*



President

Sea Island Heritage Society

## The ongoing work we do!

Here are highlights of what we've been up to since the Fall:

- In September 2025, the Society started working on the story of the BABA family of Sea Island and the BABA Bros. Boat Works, hoping to publish the story in our April 2026 newsletter. This led us to the Langham Hotel in Kaslo where some of the BABA family members were interned, the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, and descendants of Tomio BABA, son of Magosaburo and Hatsu BABA who first immigrated to Sea Island. We continue to research and write this story and hope to meet with one of the descendants early in the new year.
- In early December 2025, after a few months of research to update the Society's website, we went live with new content and updates. Amongst other things, we added a new webpage highlighting the Chinese pioneers of Sea Island (see <https://seaislandhome.org/sea-island->

[chinese-pioneers.html](#)) and updated the Cannery Community: Japanese Canadians Living on Sea Island webpage (see <https://seaislandhome.org/canneries.html>).

- On December 15, 2025, we met with Richmond Archives to continue to work towards a succession plan to turn over the Society's Collection to the archives in the future. For the time being, we are working on creating the Sea Island Heritage Society fonds and preparing the framework for the existence of the Society at the Archives.

### Bill McNulty's book

Since we first advertised the sale of Bill McNulty's book, *"Sea Island British Columbia - The Beginning of Richmond"*, in our September 2025 newsletter, we have sold 105 copies.

On our Facebook Sea Island Heritage Group page, we posted a story about the first church in Richmond that included an excerpt from Bill's book. The story is shared below.

### FIRST CHURCH IN RICHMOND

Sea Island holds a significant place in Richmond's history as the location of the first church built in the area. This post explores the origins, legacy, and ultimate fate of this important community landmark.

In 1886, John Thomas Errington generously donated the land upon which Richmond's first church was constructed. This church was established on Sea Island, precisely where the current Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport stands today. The site became a focal point for the local community, marking the beginnings of organized worship on the island. The visual of the church below offers a glimpse into the church's presence and its role in the life of Sea Island residents.

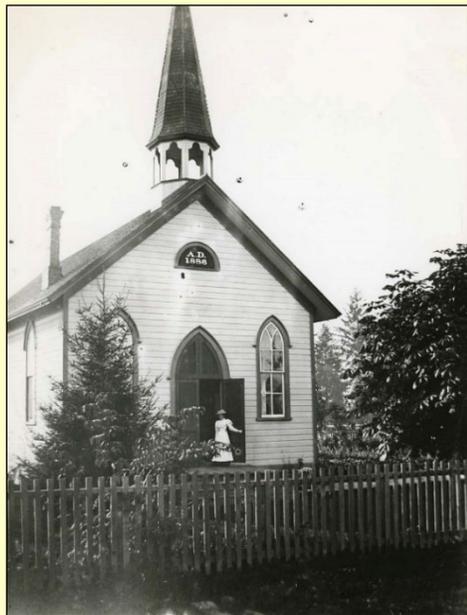


Figure 1. [Presbyterian Church on Sea Island]. (ca 1895). (Source: Richmond Archives, 1984 17 81).

To complete the story of Sea Island's first church, the following section features text from Bill McNulty's book, *"Sea Island British Columbia - The Beginning of Richmond,"* published in 2025. This account provides further insight into the historical significance of the church and its lasting impact on the community. In his book, Bill McNulty writes:

"Richmond's first church, the Sea Island Presbyterian Church, was built in 1886 for \$1,165 on land donated by John Thomas Errington. The church was built in New Westminster and floated down the Fraser River to the eastern shore of Sea Island and placed at the foot of Miller Road. The building stood on the eastern bank of Sea Island where the current Hotel stands today, just east of where the

Moray Channel Bridge joins Sea Island on Miller Road. Twenty-six members made up the first congregation, served by Reverend T. G. Thompson, who also conducted services in a newly built Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. In 1891, the congregation had grown to 42 members, and grants from the church's Home Mission funded the construction of a manse. Early ministers included Reverends J. A. Jaffray, James Buchanan (1885), A. E. Camp, and John A. Logan (1888-1889). The Municipality granted permission to the Trustees of the church to construct a plank walkway from the Fraser River to the church, on the road allowance. (Richmond Municipal Council Minutes, July 9, 1886, Volume 2, p. 77). On April 25, 1933, the church was destroyed by fire and church members moved to the Union Church in Marpole. The Presbyterian Church on Sea Island was never rebuilt. Hugh Boyd, Duncan McDonald and Fitzgerald McCleery were the first elders of the church."

Copies continue to be available through the Sea Island Heritage Society at \$40 CAD per book. For an additional \$24 CAD per copy, we will ship anywhere in Canada. If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy of the book, please contact us at [info@seaislandhome.org](mailto:info@seaislandhome.org).

## Upcoming Events

### Coffee Chats - 2026



Coffee Chats (CCs) are SIHS events that offer opportunities online and in-person to engage in fun, interactive activities where participants share stories, ask questions and learn from each other about the on-going heritage of Sea Island, Richmond, BC.

They are open to the public, offering those interested in the history and heritage of Sea Island to join the conversation.

#### Online Zoom Coffee Chats

- We are hosting four online CCs.
- Our first online Zoom Coffee Chat was held in January.
- We have three more scheduled: April, October and November.

Information about upcoming Zoom CCs will be promoted on Facebook and via email to those on our contact list.

- If you received this newsletter from the SIHS, you are on the list.
- We will provide an email address to use to request the Zoom link. Once we hear from you, we will send you the link.

### **In-person Coffee Chats**

We are hosting four in-person CCs.

- The first in-person CC will be held in March in Langley. We know many former Sea Island residents live in the valley and hope the shorter drive will encourage them to attend.
- The second will be in May where we will celebrate 25th anniversary of the Society. It will be held at Sea Island School.
- The third will be in June when we participate in Burkeville Daze at Burkeville Park.
- The fourth in-person event will be held on Vancouver Island.

Details to come for these events via Facebook, email and at Coffee Chats prior to the in-person event.

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### **SAVE THE DATE - Sea Island's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration**

We secured the gym at the Sea Island School once again for our celebration.

This year's celebration is a big one. The Society will be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary to be held on May 23, 2026. It will be open to anyone who wishes to attend.

STAY TUNED for more details!



## MAH Bing, Chinese pioneer farmer and landowner

*The Sea Island Heritage Society brings you its third Chinese pioneer family story. Although better known as the "Potato King" who owned a farm on Lulu Island, MAH Bing and two of his brothers first immigrated to Sea Island where they worked on the Grauer farm milking cows, and the first two children of MAH Bing were born on Sea Island. This is their story, condensed for the newsletter. Please contact the Society for the longer version.*

MAH Bing, also known as MAH Poy Tun, was born on August 1, 1879, to MAH Sim Keu and WONG Shee, in the village of Ping On, in the province of Guangdong in China. In 1900, he arrived in British Columbia and came to Sea Island where he worked on the Frasea Farm (Grauer farm) milking cows with two of his brothers (names are not known at this point). MAH Bing left a first wife and two children in China. One of the children was a son named Quoon (unknown details) and a son named Yam Yan "Foster" MA who later immigrated to the United States.

MAH Bing's second wife, WONG Chuen Ho (aka WONG Shee, Mrs. MAH Bing and MAR June) was born in about 1897, in the village of Gow Long, also in Guangdong. She arrived in Canada on December 23, 1909. MAH Bing and WONG Shee lived on Sea Island until approximately 1917. Their first two children, See Kee "William or Billy" MAH (1914-1964) and Toy Gee "Emily" MAH (1915-2014), were born on Sea Island.

In 1917 or 1918, MAH Bing bought a 120-acre farm across the street from the old Richmond City Hall approximately where present-day Brighthouse Park is located on Lulu Island. He became the first Chinese landowner in Richmond. He sold the Brighthouse property and in 1918, bought the 160-acre farm bordered by Francis, Williams and No. 1 Road to the north, south and east and the dike to the west, where he farmed until his retirement in 1947. MAH Bing and his two partners, MAH Lim (one of six of MAH Bing's brothers in Canada) and MAH Seek grew potatoes, carrots, onions, corn, tomatoes and green vegetables they took to Vancouver by horse and carriage to be sold at the market. Later, they used their own truck to bring the vegetables to Vancouver. After his death in 1949, the farm continued to operate until 1957.



Figure 2. [MAH Bing Co. truck]. (1931). (Source: Vancouver Archives CVA-99-4146).

MAH Bing had 11 children with WONG Shee. One son died in infancy. MAH Bing's last name was MAH. However, when the kids went to school, all were incorrectly registered with the last name BING. The children grew up going to

school with the last name BING but were MAHs to others.

In January 1927, MAH Bing and WONG Shee took their children, See Kee "William or Billy" (1914-1964), Toy Gee "Emily" (1915-2014), Yew Gee "Betty" (1917-2005), Hung Gee "Polly" (1919-2003), See Quon "Charles or Charlie" (1921-1959), Moy Gee "Mary" (1923-2019) and Gim Main "Ming", later became Bing Gregory MARR (1925-1991), to MAH Bing's ancestral home in China to arrange marriages for Emily and Betty. Hong Kong immigration said that if Betty and Emily did not return to Canada with the family, the two girls would never be able to come back to Canada.

On June 18, 1928, MAH Bing returned to Canada while his wife and children remained in China. Travel documents for Chinese individuals not born in Canada were only valid for two years at the time. Staying beyond the two years put them at risk of not being allowed back into Canada. Chinese children born in Canada were exempt from the two-year travel period. On June 10, 1931, the family returned to Canada together aboard the Empress of Canada. Once back in Canada, Shin "Wilfred" (1932-present), Bo Gee "Rose" (1934-2018) and Jenn Gee "Jean" (1936-1991) were born.

WONG Shee passed away on October 26, 1937, of cancer. She was 40 years old. Wilfred, the remaining living child of MAH Bing and WONG Shee, said he was only five years old when his mother passed away, and he does not remember her.

In the following family photo taken circa 1938-1939, the family believes that another lady sat in the chair for the photo shoot & later the head of

their deceased mother was superimposed onto the other woman's body.



Figure 3. [Back Row (left to right): Mary, Polly, Emily, William, Betty, Charles, Ming. Front Row: Rose, Wilfred, Chuen Ho WONG, MAH Bing, Jeannie - photo by Yucho Chow Studio]. (circa 1938-1939). (Source: City of Vancouver Archives AM1688-S1-F5-: 2021).

The death of WONG Shee was really hard on the family, especially the younger children. Mrs. Francis (Granny Francis), a neighbour who lived across from the MAH Bing farm, often helped the younger MAH children. Wilfred's wife Carol said that when she started going out with Wilfred, one of the first things he did was to introduce her to Granny Francis.

Life on the farm was hard. The children also worked on the farm after school. When Wilfred was approximately 12 years old, he would plant potatoes by hand with his brother Ming until late in the night. They would put a lantern at the end of the row and continue to plant after dark. Once planted, a horse would be used to cover the potatoes. They hand-watered the crops, back-breaking work. They had a pouch/basket strapped across their backs that had a long pole with a ladle at the end. They would scoop up

water from the ditch with the ladle using the long pole and fill up the pouch/basket. They then watered the crops by hand.

Wilfred said that they only spoke English at home. He learned to speak what he believes is Cantonese from the farmhands in the bunkhouse where he slept with two other workers.

In the early 1940s, MAH Bing was very active in fighting the B.C. Coast Vegetable Marketing Board, commonly known as the “potato police” to stop them from interfering with the shipping and sale of his potatoes. MAH Bing fought for other Chinese farmers in Richmond. In 1941, Chinese farmers had to let tons of their crops rot because of the B.C. Coast Vegetable Marketing Board. MAH Bing also fought for better conditions at the Lord Byng School where many of his children went.

Wilfred said that his dad worked all the time, but MAH Bing did hunt on his property and on Sea Island when not working.



Figure 4. [Rosie, Wilfred and Jeannie MAH and their dog]. (circa 1940s). (Source: Wilfred MAH Collection).

MAH Bing started getting sick before he retired in 1947. He moved to 245 West 12th Avenue in Vancouver. Wilfred and his two younger sisters, Rosie & Jeannie also lived with their dad. Wilfred was 15 years old, Rosie, 13 and Jeannie 11.

Charlie quit his studies at the University of British Columbia

(UBC) and took over the farm when MAH Bing started getting sick.

MAH Bing also owned a rooming house—MAH Pon Kai—at 231 Union Street near Chinatown in Vancouver. Wilfred remembers MAH Bing’s relatives meeting up at the rooming house on Sundays and walking over to Chinatown to go to lunch at a deli. Sometimes there would be 20 or so MAH farmers getting together. Wilfred said that all the MAHs of Sea Island were relatives of MAH Bing and would be part of the farmers getting together at the rooming house.

MAH Bing passed away on October 10, 1949.

In 1951, Charlie married Gertrude LEE and lived on the farm on Lulu Island. In 1953, Charlie contracted tuberculosis and Wilfred went back to work on the farm. Charlie died of complications from tuberculosis in 1959. After his death, Gertrude sold the farm, went back to UBC and became a teacher. Selling the family farm was a big bone of contention amongst the MAH siblings.

In a Vancouver Sun article dated November 30, 1959, titled “Ex-Richmond Farm Subject of Litigation”, it said that:

“MAH Bing purchased the 640-acre farm in 1917 for \$45,000 and it was sold for subdividing in 1954 for \$160,000, now a housing development, the subject of litigation in Supreme Court. When MAH Bing died 10 years prior, he owned one-sixth interest in the farm and his heirs were seeking distribution of their share of the selling price in accordance with an agreement made by the six owners. Mr. Justice J.O. Wilson appointed a trust company to take over MAH Bing’s estate from one of two sons named as executors, See Quon “Charlie” MAH of 937 No. 1 Road, Richmond. The other

executor, Gim Main MAH, a Vancouver draftsman, alleged his brother had taken complete control of their father’s assets and had failed to distribute all proceeds among beneficiaries. The matter was adjourned for further hearing”.

By 1960, Gim Main had changed his name to Bing Gregory MARR.

**Shin “Wilfred” MAH**



Figure 5. [Shin “Wilfred” MAH on his farm in Ladner, 92 years old]. (2025). (Source: Sea Island Heritage Society).

At 93 years old, Wilfred is the sole living direct descendant of MAH Bing and WONG Shee. Wilfred is married to Carole June WONG and live on their farm in Ladner. Together, they had four children: Cameron, Calvin, Shelley and Barry.

Wilfred was born on the farm on Lulu Island but spent a lot of time on Sea Island, hunting behind the First Nations Reserve on the mud flats along the dike or visiting family.



Figure 6. [Duck decoy carved by Wilfred MAH]. (2025). (Source: Sea Island Heritage Society).

Wilfred was a member of the Vancouver Gun Club, the first Chinese person to be allowed in a gun club. Amongst his many talents, Wilfred was a champion trapshooter and skeetshooter, and carved decoys. In the shooting world, he was known as Will BING. Wilfred knew the BICKNELLS also known for their carvings of decoys.

When asked about the MAHs from Sea Island, Wilfred shared the following:

MAH Back Yow (1875-1965), one of MAH Bing’s



Figure 7. Harry MAH's mother - name unknown, Harry MAH, MAH Back Yow]. (unk date). (Source: MAH Family Collection).

six brothers in Canada, farmed on Sea Island until his family was expropriated for the expansion of Vancouver International Airport (YVR). His son, Hong Hay “Harry” MAH (1933-2024) went to Sea Island School before the family moved to Cloverdale in Surrey. Harry and

Wilfred also went to a Chinese school in Vancouver’s Chinatown together.

Wilfred would go to MAH Fong’s place all the time. He said MAH Fong farmed on the Musqueam Reserve. He had a lean-to with a stove and bed in there. MAH Fong’s wife had a vegetable stand on No. 5 Road and Cambie Road in Richmond. MAH Fong had an adopted son named James MAH who lived in Nova Scotia. Wilfred met James through his

trapshooting competitions. MAH Fong was related to MAH Bing.

Wilfred said that MAH Look was related to MAH Bing, and so was MAH Wing Toi (Toy). MAH Wing Toi (Toy) had no children and farmed on Hoggard's land.

Wilfred also said that WONG Fang and WONG Fee were related to MAH Bing. Both were married to MAH/MA women.

### MAH Bing Street - Richmond

In 2008, the City of Richmond named a street after MAH Bing. MAH Bing Street parallels Minoru Boulevard to the west and can be found north of the Richmond Library. In December 2025, the street sign was finally erected, along with a traffic light at MAH Bing Street and Minoru Boulevard, across from the Richmond Centre Mall.



Figure 8. [MAH Bing Street sign, Richmond, British Columbia]. (2025). (Source: Sea Island Heritage Society).

## The Thomas Laird Mackie Family

*We are excited to share two stories written by Barbara Kinahan (née Moodie), one about the*

*Mackie family on Sea Island and one about Great Uncle Willie Laird Mackie's old silver watch.*

### Mackie Family Life on Sea Island, 1887-1914

*written by Barbara Kinahan (née Moodie)*

Thomas Laird Mackie (1831-1912) and Elizabeth Syme (1837-1917) had ten children, all born in Fifeshire, Scotland. Two had passed before the family came to Canada.

In 1887, Thomas Laird Mackie, his wife Elizabeth Syme and eight of their children - William, Anne Jane (Jean), John, Thomas, Marion (Barbara Kinahan's grandmother), Alexander, Robert and Elizabeth - came to live on Sea Island, British Columbia. They had made a hazardous voyage from their native Scotland, leaving poverty behind for the promise of a better life in Canada.

Thomas Laird Mackie had been born in Dundee, one of three boys, to George Mackie and his wife Jean Laird. Their father, George, was a Seaman and often away at sea, and their mother had died, Thomas Laird Mackie and his brothers, William Pitcairn, and John, were raised by their maternal grandparents, Thomas Laird and his wife Barbara Rough, and their aunt Anne Laird. The brother's father, George Mackie, lived with them at Rosebank between voyages.

Thomas Laird (the grandfather) was a handloom weaver, working at the Laird family home on Rosebank in Dundee. Thomas Laird Mackie (the grandson) found work as a bleacher in Walkerton, Fife. He married and his family lived in Fife, upstairs in a stone cottage in two rooms, cooking over an open fire. Two of his children, William (age 10 at the time) and Anne Jane (age

12 at the time) also worked as bleachers, having completed their education.

Thomas Laird Mackie's brother, William Pitcairn Mackie, had left Dundee in 1849 and by 1860, after working in gold mines and logging in BC, had settled in Gastown - now Vancouver. Letters home would have encouraged his younger brother, Thomas, to emigrate. Thomas, his wife and eight children did.

These early settlers were not farmers, but with hard labour they learned to work the fertile soil and to raise livestock, too. The Thomas Laird Mackie farm on Sea Island was near the middle arm of the Fraser River near where it empties into the Pacific Ocean.



Figure 10. [Mackie home in Vancouver built for Elizabeth Syme Mackie and her sons]. (1914). (Source: Barbara Kinahan Collection).

On Sunday mornings the family walked along the dike to the Presbyterian church on Sea Island. A family story told of Thomas Laird Mackie carrying the family Bible to church each week so he could follow the scriptures as the minister read the lesson for the day. One morning the family was late. He urged them on,

hastily picked up his book and off they went. Imagine the family's merriment when Thomas opened the book to find he had brought his wife's cookbook instead of the Bible.



Figure 9. [Presbyterian Church on Sea Island]. (1886). (Source: Richmond Archives 1978-0008-00004).

There is another story of Elizabeth Syme Mackie, too. There was a great flood of the Fraser River in 1897. The day the dyke broke she had made donuts. These she put to cool in the cellar. When she went to get them, she found them all floating in the water from the rising river.

The Mackie's eldest daughter Anne Jane (Jean), her husband William Williamson, sons Thomas and James also found farmland on Sea Island.

Vancouver, British Columbia was a growing city through the late 1800s and by 1929, land was needed for an airport. Sea Island, sadly, had to give up its many fertile fields to progress.

Thomas Laird Mackie died on 09 February 1912 having lived to see his children and grandchildren settled in this new land. The Mackie and Williamson families had moved from their farms across the river to Vancouver.

The Mackie home, built in 1914, was spacious - a beautiful place. It was built as a home for Elizabeth Syme Mackie and her sons William, John, Alexander, Thomas and Robert. The daughters had married, and their father's brother, William Pitcairn, had moved to his nephew, William Mackie's 75-acre farm in Agassiz.

The Mackie farm on Sea Island was rented until the city of Vancouver bought it in 1929 for \$70,000. Wisely invested, it meant a comfortable life at last. When they moved from the farm, they brought a cow with them for fresh milk. The cow was pastured in a field across the road. A small barn behind the home housed a pony and carriage for transportation. And they brought the farm dog too.

As a child, I (Barbara Kinahan) visited the two remaining Mackie brothers Great Uncle Willie, his wife, Aunt Christina, and Great Uncle Tom, every Sunday morning. I loved the beautiful, spacious house and garden. A trip to the barn was special, after thirty years I could still smell the scent of the old pony and harness.

The Mackie brothers were not idle in their later years. The garden was a source of fruit and vegetables. But the beauty of their garden was beds of roses, circles of standard roses were surrounded by neatly edged grass. Beds of fragrant roses won them many cups from the Vancouver Rose Society competitions in the 1920s. The silver-plated cups are still treasured by me as a tangible memory of the Mackie family who left their beloved Scotland so long ago.

## The Tale of the Old Silver Watch

*written by Barbara Kinahan (née Moodie)*

Great Uncle William 'Willie' Syme Mackie (1858-1948) was a brother to Barbara Kinahan's grandmother, Marion Brown Mackie (1870-1949). Uncle Willie moved from Sea Island to Vancouver with his mother, Elizabeth Syme Mackie, and brothers, Thomas, Alexander, and Robert in 1914. His sister, Marion, married Thomas Laing in 1895 and farmed on Sea Island. This story is a rich memory of Barbara, as a child, visiting Uncle Willie one Sunday.

On one of our Sunday morning visits to Great Uncle Willie at his lovely home in Vancouver, my sister and I had a surprise. Uncle Willie beckoned us over to stand by his chair. We stood there while he placed an old silver pocket watch first in my sister's hands, then in mine. It was huge and heavy in our small hands.



Figure 11. [Great Uncle Willie's old silver watch]. (1987). (Source: Barbara Kinahan Collection).

Uncle Willie then took the watch and, prying open the back, he showed us that the watch was lined with cerise silk. He then said this silk was from the lining of Napoleon's carriage from The Battle of Waterloo. He told us that his 'great grand uncle John Mackie' had fought at that famous battle on June 18, 1815, which saw the final defeat of Napoleon.

I'm afraid this information meant nothing to two little girls aged four and five. However, the

moment has stayed alive in my memory. It was probably enhanced when, a few days later, I heard my grandmother say to my mother, "it wasn't his to give away." At the time, I didn't intrude on their conversation - just another item to pique a young child's curiosity.



Figure 12. [Barbara Kinahan viewing the watch at the Vancouver Museum]. (2024). (Source: Barbara Kinahan Collection).

Many years later, I pieced the story together. My great uncle William Syme Mackie had given a valuable family relic to Major Matthews who was the City of Vancouver's first Archivist. The watch and its secret are still hidden away in the Major Matthew's

Collection in the City of Vancouver Museum. Some years ago, I asked to see the watch. My daughters and I viewed and photographed it then. Recently I contacted the Archives with a view to, once again, photographing the watch and its silk secret.

My daughter and I did see the watch and she took several photos. It was disappointing as the actual silk is now covered by a watchmaker's paper, so we could only see the edge of the silk under its cover. The



Figure 13. [J. Webster watchmaker's red paper naming maker and location with edge of brown silk showing beneath red cover]. (2024). (Source: Barbara Kinahan Collection).

archivist would not remove the fragile paper. So, in fact, the black and white photo from 1987 is more authentic.

The watchmaker's red paper may be of interest. The shop it came from was in Leslie, Fifeshire, not far from the hamlet of Walkerton where Thomas Laird Mackie and his family lived and worked in the bleach fields.

The watch is hallmarked and dated 1875. That corresponds to the time Thomas Mackie of Dundee worked in Walkerton before emigrating to Canada in 1886.

But all is not lost. My cousin has a gold-filled pocket watch her father inherited from one of his Mackie uncles. In the back there is a small square of cerise silk. The story doesn't end there. For many years I have been searching for any record of the elusive Sergeant John Mackie. I have found several soldiers with the surname Mackie to verify Uncle Willie's tale (so far, no luck). He was very accurate with family stories, so my search continues.

As a genealogist, my clues to find this ancestor are - a story told to a four-year-old child and to a now deceased Archivist, and a piece of old silk.

*This story was first published in the June 2025 issue of the Tay Valley Family History Society Journal, Dundee, Fifeshire, Scotland.*

## In Loving Memory

Sadly, we have heard of two Sea Islanders who passed away since our last newsletter:

### SHARON MAY BIRCH NÉE HAMMELL (1943-2025)



Sharon May Birch (née Hammell) passed away on November 13, 2025, on Denman Island. Sharon moved to Cora Brown, Sea Island, with her parents, Midge and Harold Hammell, when she was four years old. She spent her childhood there, while attending Sea Island Elementary, Cambie Junior High School, and graduating from Richmond High School in 1961. She left Cora Brown to start her family and returned to Cora Brown to raise her family. She first lived in the Richardson's home on Abercrombie and then moved to her childhood home on Myron Drive. In 1974, Sharon moved to her new home on Blundell Road. She lived in Richmond until 2016. Sharon participated actively in her community and served on various boards, such as the City Centre Community Association and Richmond Library. Her siblings—Sue, Barry, and Val—had relocated to the islands. Sharon lived her final five years with her sisters, Sue and Val, on Denman Island.

### DOUGLAS “DOUG, DOUGIE” HAMALOCK



Douglas “Doug, Dougie” Hamalock passed away peacefully on December 29, 2025, at the age of 70, in Vernon, British Columbia.

Doug grew up in the Cora Brown subdivision on Sea Island and attended both Duncan McDonald School and Sea Island School on Sea Island. He is the baby brother of Eunice, Lauretta and Muriel. Following in his father’s footsteps, he loved to tinker with the many vehicles he owned over his life. Later he became a truck driver, known as “Swish”. He lived in Langley for many years, moving to Vernon about 4 years ago. He is predeceased by his wife Monika and son Rob. He is survived by his wife Janice, son Andy (Laura) and daughter Angela (Jordan), and grandchildren; sisters, brothers-in-law, nieces and nephews. Doug was a

very happy-go-lucky guy, enjoying the simple life in Vernon. He will be missed by his family and friends. “It is what it is”!

## Sea Island Artifacts and Memorabilia

Over the past few months, we have had some lovely donations. Donations are welcomed and appreciated. If you are downsizing or just cleaning out those boxes from the basement or attic, anything “Sea Island” would be most appreciated. Contact Eunice at [eunice@genbug.ca](mailto:eunice@genbug.ca).



## CONTACT US

If you have questions, comments, or want to share your memories and photos, we would love to hear from you.

To submit a letter, documents, photos, or a cheque for your membership or donation via snail mail:

**Sea Island Heritage Society**

Box 88051, Lansdowne Mall  
Richmond, British Columbia  
V6X 3T6

To be added to our e-Newsletter, or send us an email: [info@seaislandhome.org](mailto:info@seaislandhome.org)

To join, renew your membership or donate by e-Transfer: [treasurersihs@seaislandhome.org](mailto:treasurersihs@seaislandhome.org)

Website: <https://seaislandhome.org>

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*"Sea Island is located within the traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh Peoples."*