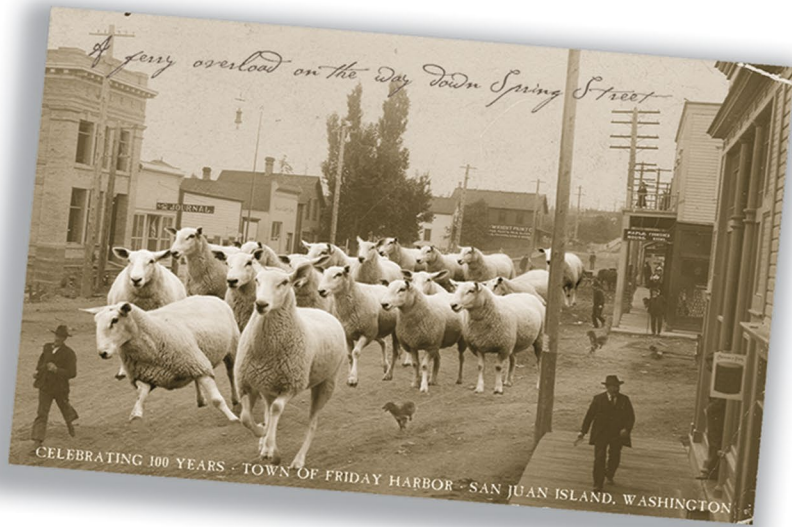


THERE'S A STORY HERE: EXAGGERATION POSTCARDS IMAGINED



Before Photoshop, innovative photographers used photographic manipulation to create a novel and inexpensive genre of souvenir known as “exaggeration” postcards.

More tongue-in-cheek than purposely deceptive, these postcards were popular between the early 1900s and the 1940s. Most popular were cards that boasted of “the one that got away” or extolled the superiority of a place or local commodity.

While exaggeration postcards were produced in Washington State and throughout the nation, none were known to be from San Juan County. Recently however, the San Juan Historical Museum uncovered two postcards created by regional photographer J.A. McCormick (1877-1955); one of them is part of this installation (*It's the Salt Air!*).

There's a Story Here imagines the other exaggeration postcards that might have been.

The Town of Friday Harbor is grateful to all who contributed to this project. *There's a Story Here* was made possible thanks to the skilled and clever design know-how of Kristine Brown of Printonyx; artists Jennifer Rigg, Paige Carlson, and Emily Fitts; the research efforts of Town Historic Preservation Coordinator Sandy Strehlou; the priceless photo archives of the San Juan Historical Museum; the McRae family; the Whatcom Museum; and the gracious offer of this display space by building owners Jeff and Alicia Carnevali.

THE STORY BEHIND THE INTRODUCTORY PANEL POSTCARD

Sheep have been an important part of the island's agricultural sector since 1853 when the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) unloaded the first 1,369 sheep onto San Juan Island's southern prairie on Griffin Bay.

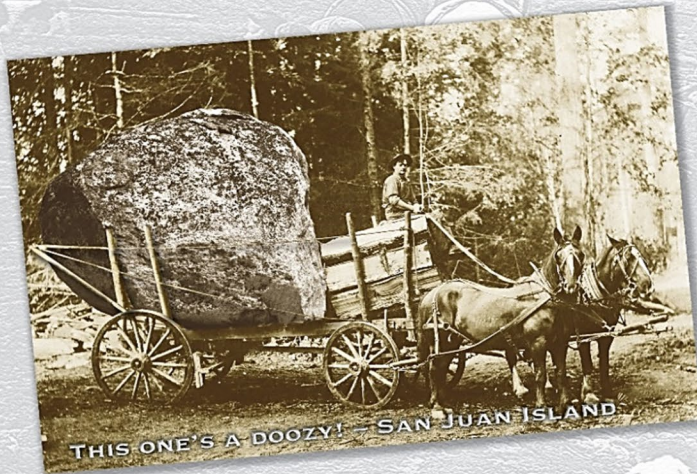
In this early photograph taken long after the HBC had departed the island, a local farmer herds sheep to the harbor where they will be shipped to Spieden Island for grazing.



Postcard created for the Town of Friday Harbor Centennial Celebration by Kristine Brown, Printonyx, 2009.

Photo courtesy San Juan Historical Museum, photographer unknown.

Sources: *Images of America Friday Harbor*, Mike Vouri and Julia Vouri, 2009. *Island Farming: History and Landscape of Agriculture in the San Juan Islands*, Boyd C. Pratt, 2019. *Tall-Tale Postcards: A Pictorial History*, Roger L. Welsch, 1976.



NOBODY GROWS 'EM BIGGER!

This exaggeration postcard portrays San Juan Island's ubiquitous glacial stones as a valuable market crop.

For early island farmers, clearing fields of old growth firs and field stone was no easy task. Giant boulders were left by the retreating Fraser glacier 10,000 to 15,000 years ago.

When boulders proved too large to budge, farmers plowed, planted, and selected building sites around them.

THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 1 POSTCARD



This c1910 photograph shows island volunteers bringing wagonloads of glacial rock "harvested" from farms outside town. Their efforts would create the bulkhead and retaining wall on the harbor at Front Street.

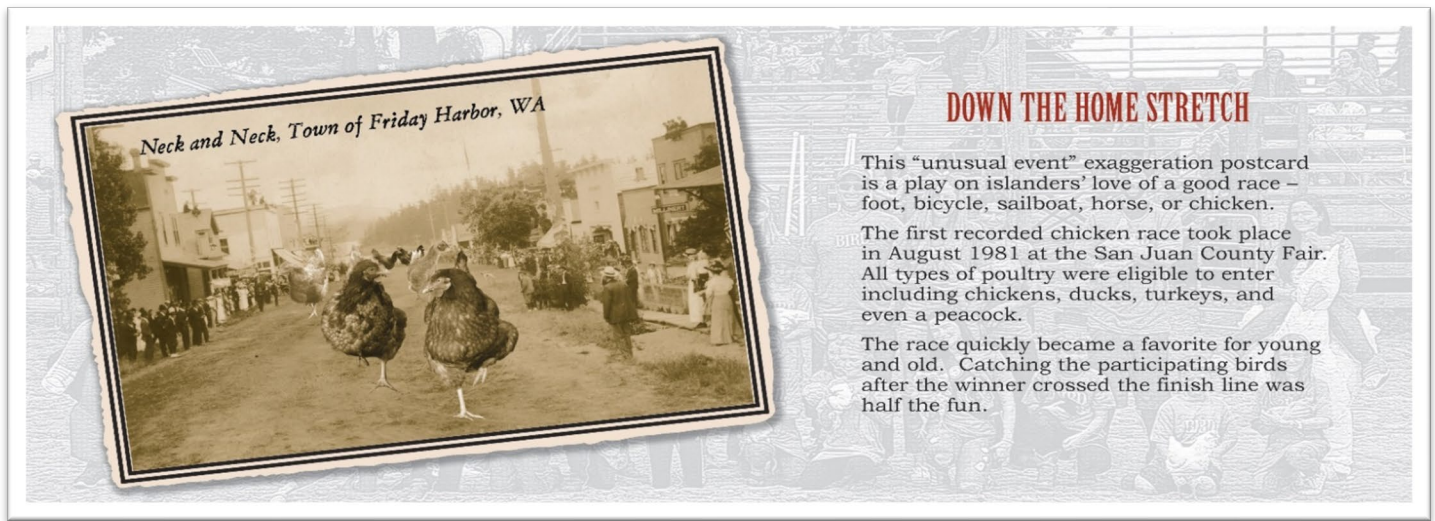
Completed c1917, the stacked boulders raised the shoreline to level and stabilize the ever-important town dock pilings once located there.

It is likely the soil-covered boulders aided the successful growth and longevity of the now 100-year-old Memorial Park elms, allowing their roots to find purchase. The trees also benefit from the underground spring flowing freely under Spring Street toward the harbor.

Postcard photo courtesy San Juan Historical Museum, photographer unknown, modified by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Photo courtesy San Juan Historical Museum, J.A. McCormick, photographer.

Source: *Images of America Friday Harbor*, Mike Vouri and Julia Vouri, 2009.



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 2 POSTCARD



“The Great Chicken Races were the funniest events. Handlers of real chickens learned the first day they were in trouble when Bill Babcock showed up with a DUCK! Protest signs were quickly drawn, but to no avail. Babcock came back and won the second chicken race with an Indian Racer duck. But by the time the sun was overhead Saturday, Babcock had competition. Burrell Osburn, saddened that his Great Speckled hen had been thumped by a duck, arrived carrying a mysterious paper sack, and urged all to put their money on his surprise entry.

It turned out to be another duck! As contestants gathered in the center ring, the judges saw a turkey, geese, ducks and – coming in the back door – the South Spieden “duck,” which strongly resembled a goat adorned with feathers. It was ordered out of the ring.”

*Journal of the San Juan Islands,
August 22, 1984*

Historical research and poster art courtesy Jennifer Rigg, Loea, www.loea.shop/the-great-chicken-race

Postcard photo of a ladies-only horseback race, c1920, courtesy Peggy Sue McRae, modified by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Photo of 1995 San Juan County Fair chicken race courtesy San Juan Historical Museum.

IT'S THE SALT AIR!

Agricultural boosterism was another favorite genre during the heyday of exaggeration postcards, and, of course, bigger was always better. In the early years, local island farmers had a lot to crow about.

There was an advantage to delivering produce to market by ship, and this helped make the islands our state's first apple-growing region. San Juan County apples were exported as far away as New York.



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 3 POSTCARD



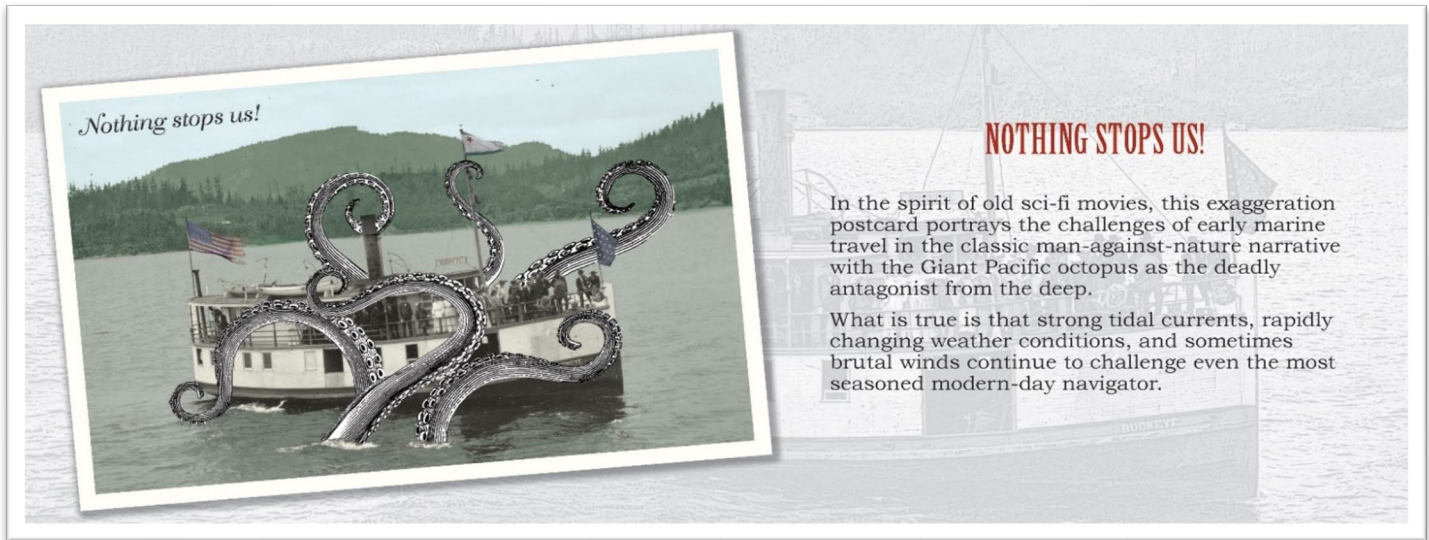
Apple harvests peaked in 1910 with 76,731 trees recorded countywide. One year, a single Orcas Island orchardist shipped 4,000 boxes of apples. By the 1930s, marine shipping was supplanted by fast and reliable cross-country railroads, and federal irrigation projects made Eastern Washington a more attractive fruit growing region.

Today, heritage fruit trees can be found tucked away in backyards and village knolls, on farms, and in unexpected open spaces throughout San Juan County. They continue to produce a cornucopia of extraordinary fruit not found in modern markets.

Postcard photo courtesy San Juan Historical Museum, J.A. McCormick, photographer, modified by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Clipping of "The First County Fair," *Friday Harbor Journal*, September 20, 1906, recreated by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Sources: *The James Francis Tulloch Diary 1875-1910*, James Tulloch and Gordon Keith, 1978. *Island Farming: History and Landscape of Agriculture in the San Juan Islands*, Boyd C. Pratt, 2019. *Images of America San Juan Island*, Mike Vouri and Julia Vouri, 2010. "Quality is our Boast," *Friday Harbor Journal*, November 11, 1906.



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 4 POSTCARD

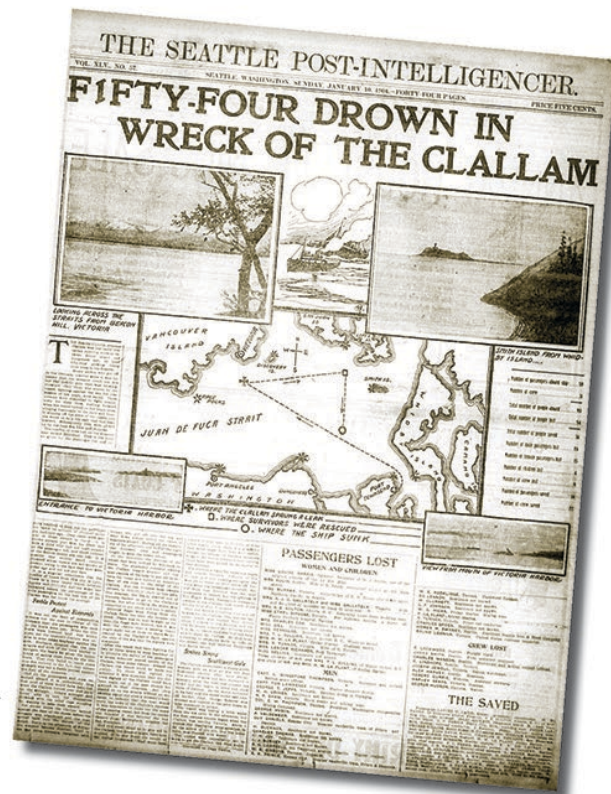
There was a time when only indigenous canoes and sailing ships plied the waters from Alaska and Canada to the San Juans and mainland U.S.

When steamers began carrying products and people along established routes throughout the islands and Puget Sound, the vessels were so numerous that people said they resembled a swarm of mosquitoes. Dubbed the “Mosquito Fleet,” these many hundreds of steamships traveled from port to port around the sound.

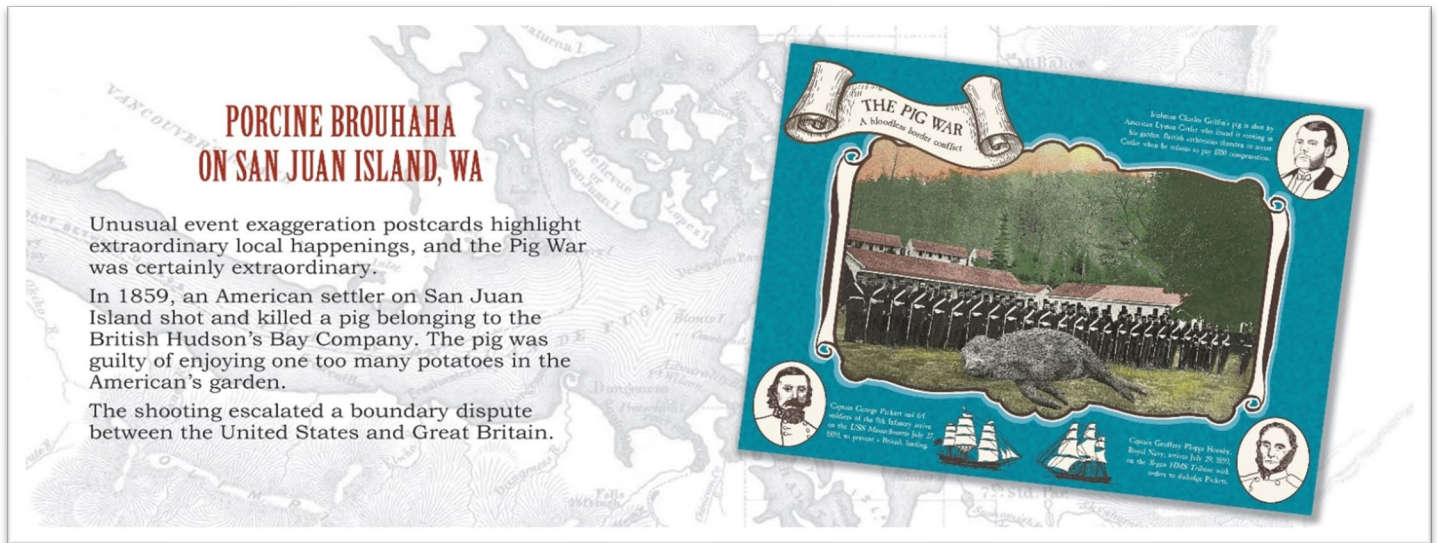
Today we know this fleet as the Washington State Ferries.

Postcard photo of the steamer *Buckeye* courtesy San Juan Historical Museum, photographer unknown, modified by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Sources: “Mosquito Fleet,” Essay 869, David B. Williams, HistoryLink.org, 2021. *Images of America Friday Harbor*, Mike Vouri and Julia Vouri, 2009. “Little Steamer Driven from Course on Tuesday’s Trip to Seattle,” *Friday Harbor Journal*, April 11, 1907. “Friday Harbor Waterfront,” Essay 10690, Boyd C. Pratt, HistoryLink.org, 2013.

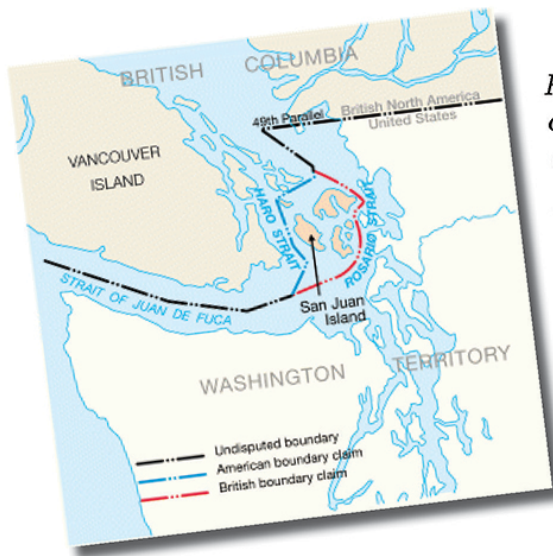


“Fifty-Four Drown in Wreck of the Clallam,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 10, 1904, www.historylink.org/File/7936



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 5 POSTCARD

Instead of war, both sides agreed to binding arbitration by Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany, whose decision was issued in 1872 following an amicable 12-year joint occupation. The Kaiser ruled that the boundary should run through Haro Strait, not Rosario Strait to the east, thus giving the San Juan Islands to the United States.



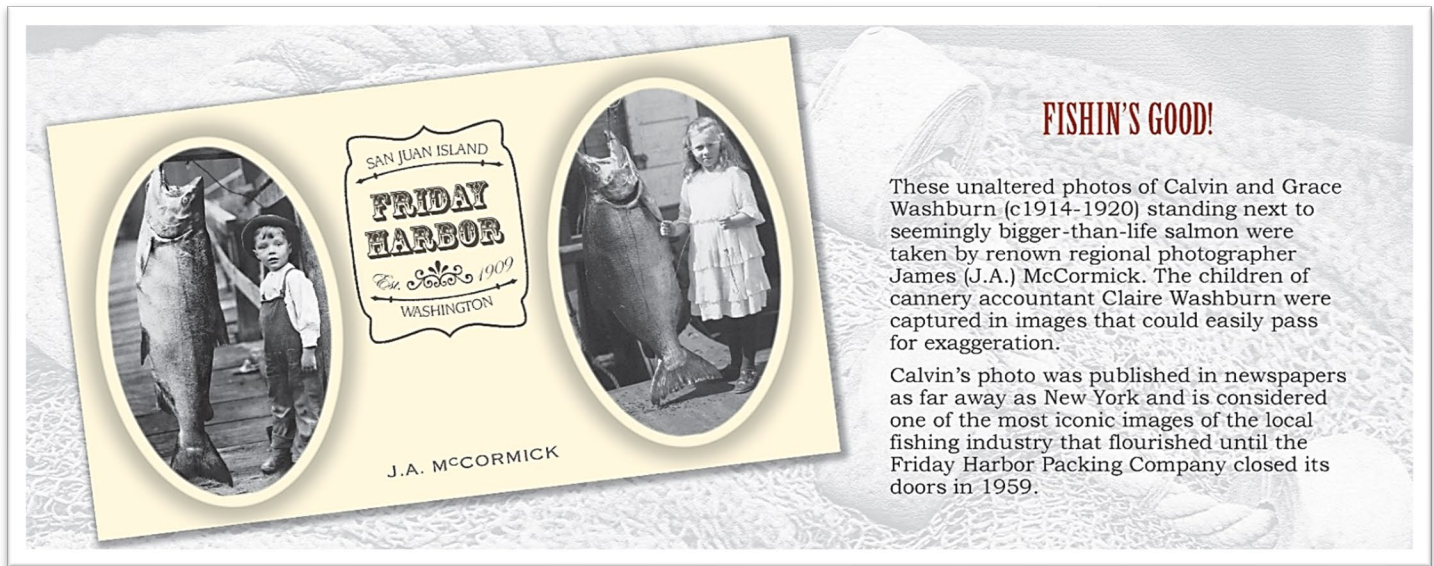
History ultimately turns on individual choices. Despite the blunders, the right choices were made in the end. Two powerful nations nearly went to war, spent thousands of dollars and pounds, and exchanged tons of paper over ownership of an island 16 1/3 miles long and six miles wide. But honor had been served and the peace kept, the pig being the only casualty.

Mike Vouri, *The Pig War Standoff at Griffin Bay*, 1999

Postcard photos courtesy Whatcom Museum and iStock Photos, modified by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Drawings by Emily Pitts (ships) and Paige Carlson (portraits), 2021, based on public domain photos.

Source: *The Pig War Standoff at Griffin Bay*, Mike Vouri, 1999.



FISHIN'S GOOD!

These unaltered photos of Calvin and Grace Washburn (c1914-1920) standing next to seemingly bigger-than-life salmon were taken by renown regional photographer James (J.A.) McCormick. The children of cannery accountant Claire Washburn were captured in images that could easily pass for exaggeration.

Calvin's photo was published in newspapers as far away as New York and is considered one of the most iconic images of the local fishing industry that flourished until the Friday Harbor Packing Company closed its doors in 1959.

THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 6 POSTCARD

Coast Salish people from across the region reef-netted and trolled for salmon in the islands for generations. Euro-Americans adapted this method on a larger scale, creating fish traps that could catch thousands of fish in one day.

By 1899, Euro-American corporations like the Friday Harbor Packing Company had displaced nearly all Native fishing claims throughout the Salish Sea. Their cannery employed hundreds including Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino laborers brought in to help local workers process the seemingly inexhaustible salmon runs.

Commercial purse seining and recreational sports fishing began to rival the fish traps. Salmon stocks declined due to overfishing and environmental degradation. Ultimately, unfavorable market forces dealt the final blow to the industry, and by 1959, all the once thriving canneries had closed.



Photos of the Washburn children courtesy Whatcom Historical Museum, J.A. McCormick, photographer, modified by Kristine Brown, 2021.

Photo of cannery courtesy San Juan Historical Museum.

Sources: *San Juan Island National Historical Park: An Environmental History*, Christine Avery, National Park Service, 2004. *Images of America Friday Harbor*, 2009. and *Images of America San Juan Island*, 2010. Mike Vouri and Julia Vouri. "Salmon Bank (San Juan Island)," essay #20510, Mike Vouri, www.HistoryLink.org, 2018.