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Date: Interview recorded in 2010 about events on the island, ca. 1940

Description: Interview with Swans Islander Theo May about the Buswell Family farm

Interview with Theo May about the Buswell Family farm and sheep, ca. 1940

My name is Theo Buswell May, and I grew up mostly here on Swan's Island. First two or three months on North Haven, that's where I was born. We worked hard when we were kids. There was five of us, four girls and one boy, and we had to pull our weight right along with the rest because we had cows and hens and sheep and you know, garden and everything had to be tended, so we got up and did our share before we went to school and when we came home we did it again (laughter).

My sister liked doing work in the house, and I hated it. I loved outdoor work, so I got to take the cows out and water them and feed the hens and chase the sheep down, make sure they were in their pens at night and.. (laugh) We had the barn, it was just across the road here. And that was full of animals. My grandfather always made sure that we had one that would be our winter's meat. We had lamb, plenty of chickens, all of the stuff that we need was from the farm. And of course we had butter and cream and hen's eggs and you know everything that you would get out of a barn and a hen pen.

I helped my grandmother with the butter making. You put your cream in your churn and you up and down and up and down until it separated. You could do it now with an electric beater. And oh, I loved the buttermilk. It came out of that churn with little specks of butter in it, and you could drink it right out of the churn. It was beautiful stuff. And then she'd take the butter and take it and pound, you know, you had to pound out all that water, all that milk that was in there and make it solid. And then she let it drain, and then she had a butter stamp that she'd fill the butter stamp with the butter and then on top of the butter when you'd take it out there'd be this little leaf on the top of the butter which I always thought was kind of cute (laugh). It had the little stamp right on it.

We had a ox which turned into a pet and everybody loved that, that animal. We called him Amos. That's the only time I ever saw my father cry, was when that ox died. My father said that he had kept us from starving to death a good many winters, by you know, hauling out wood and you know made money that way to get us through the winter. I don't think people realize today how hard anybody had to work for what they got. No, it was quite an interesting life. I'd do it again in a minute, if I could. Hard work, good time. I think your good time is what you make of it. If you make, whatever it is you're doing, if you make it fun. That's the best part of it, right there.