

Jack's Market and Carrier's Corner

By Bruce Haulman and Terry Donnelly

Everyone who drives to the North End Ferry Dock is familiar with the building that is now John L Scott Realty at what was once known as Carrier's Corner. Jack and Naomi Stark (no relation of the GoT's Starks that we know of) built the building in 1948 after the small store they operated on the end of the Heights Dock was closed when a second slip was added, and forced the ferry system to remove the small store building.

The store was built so the family could live in the apartment on the second floor, and the store filled the lower floor. Known as Jack's Market, the store was one of the many small community stores that dotted the island from the introduction of the Mosquito Fleet Docks in the 1890s through the 1970s and 1980s when the last of these community stores closed. The one exception is the Burton Store - Harbor Mercantile - that is still open and affectionately know as "Sandy's" by islanders, after Sandy Mattara who purchased the store in 1977 and has kept it open ever since. Of the original fifteen community stores on the island, "Sandy's" is the last. All of the others closed as roads improved, the automobile made travel to Vashon Town easier, and owners began to retire or move on, leaving no one to continue to keep the stores open.



Jacks Market, 1948 "Big Snow", Gene Sherman

These community stores sold a bit of everything and were the equivalents of the modern 7-11 stores off-island. Many of them had gas pumps and some had small cafes or lunch counters. But they could not compete as the island modernized around them.

Jack and Naomi sold the business to Ed Starkey who then sold it to Ralph and Bernelda Wilkison. When the Walcotts took over in the 1960s they opened a restaurant in the west side of the lower floor under the apartment and operated the store on the east side of the lower floor. The final owners operating it as a store were the Carriers. The building became a realty office in the 1980s and is today John L Scott Realty.



John L Scott Realty, 2015, Terry Donnelly

Perhaps one of the most interesting things about these two photographs is the lack of trees in the 1948 photo taken by Gene Sherman during the big snowstorm of that year, and the dense coverage of trees (mostly Douglas Firs) in the recent photograph by Terry Donnelly. In the late 1940s, Vashon was still largely without big trees. The major logging of 30 years earlier had stripped the island of its tree cover, and active farming kept the trees that did grow back limited to a few areas.

Between 1948 and 2017 the Douglas Fir forest that dominates the Vashon tree-scape in the 2000s has had time to mature and top over the alders and vine maples that first colonize a cleared area. It takes about 80 to 120 years for a Douglas Fir to reach its maximum height and then it begins to spread and gain girth until it reaches maturity at about 300-400 years. Douglas Firs are long lived and 600 to 800 year-old trees are not uncommon and trees as old as 1,300 to 1,400 years old still flourish.

Discussing what the Vashon and Maury Island forests will look like in another thousand years with Bianca Perla of the Vashon Nature Center, it is hard to know. If predicted climate change and invasive species patterns play out, many forests on Vashon may give way to shrub thickets, grasslands, or early succession stage forests. However, if forest succession proceeds as it has in the past, the island in 3017 could look much like it did in 1792 when George Vancouver was the first European to see Vashon. Only time will tell.

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