

Insights from interviews with Charles ("Chuck") Bos. There have been numerous interviews and the ones that resulted in this paper were held on September 27, 2009 and October 10, 2009 at his residence in Oak Harbor.

Chuck states that his birthday was May 20, 1915 and he was born and raised in Oak Harbor. He is the last surviving grandson of Peter Bos, the first known owner of the dairy farm around what is now known as Swantown ("Swan") Lake. Chuck's grandparents emigrated from Holland in the early 1880's and originally farmed in the Dakotas before ultimately settling in Washington State. Chuck does not know the exact year that the Bos Family acquired the farm on Whidbey Island. As the years passed, his Uncle Nick Bos took over the operations of the farm from his father, Peter Bos. Chuck worked on his uncle's farm for a short time as a young man. The following describes Chuck's recollections of Bos Lake stories and memories of existing conditions during his early years as a child and then as a young man. Swan Lake was named Bos Lake for many years in honor of the Bos Family.

According to Chuck, tide gates were built before he was born. He did not know the name(s) of the Dutch farmer(s) who did the initial construction. He believes the tide gates have always been in their current location. Additionally, before his time, there was an ongoing problem with the lake level getting too high at the north end and the water running overtop a low area of land. As a result, in addition to the tide gates, the low area was filled and a culvert was installed to relieve water pressure at the north end of Bos Lake into what is now the SW corner of Joseph Whidbey State Park. These construction events occurred before his time, and there may have been additional modifications to the natural system that he of which he is not aware.

When Chuck was growing up, the lake was larger than it is currently - specifically it was closer to his relatives' two farm

houses on the east side of the lake and it covered more of the current marsh located north of the current lake toward what is now Joseph Whidbey State Park. The water was always brackish. The water would get higher and lower with the tides. The strip of coastal land west of Bos Lake and east of the Strait of Juan de Fuca was in a different, more natural state – only a sandy beach berm south of the tide gates separated the lake from the strait. There were no houses or road on the coastal strip. The driftwood and water would come over the sandy beach and deposit driftwood logs in Bos Lake during some storm events. There was a foot trail that ran north and south of the tide gates that they would walk on and shoot ducks.

Swantown Road was the most westerly road. There was a gate at the north west end of Swantown Road that would be opened sometimes when the farmers would take wagons down closer to the beach at a location north of the lake and meet rumrunners in the middle of the night to pick up alcohol during Prohibition in the 1920's. There was a low wet area there that ran parallel to the beach that had a couple of +/-10-12' logs across the top to allow people to cross over to the beach and access the foot trail along the beach. This low wet area ran north for approximately a mile north of Bos Lake.

Eventually, the citizens wanted to drain the lake even more so they built a ditch north of the current size lake running east/west between the property lines where there is currently an old fence line. The tide gates had been inefficient and were replaced with new, improved gates. In conjunction with the tide gates, this new ditch drained additional land and the water was more contained in the ditch and a natural swale that meandered north to the low point and ended at the culvert into what is now the SW corner of Joseph Whidbey State Park. The exact sequence of these two events is not clear. As time went on, the lake level continued to drop and it got smaller. Then the farmers grew "mangos" (some sort of root

vegetable) to feed the dairy cows and had extra pasture in land that was under Bos Lake in his early years.

Chuck also has memories of fish traps along the west coast of Whidbey Island.

To the best of my knowledge:

Chuck Bos Oct 11, 2009.
Chuck Bos Date

Witness:

GayLynn Beighton 10/11/2009
GayLynn Beighton, Pres. Date
SLWPG

