



Eugene M. Gilland's Merrifield Stock Farm north of Dewdney Trunk Road at 237<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Berryland Cannery

Around 1927, anticipating bankruptcy at the United Berry Growers Co-operative in Port Haney, plant principal Eugene M. Gilland decided to leave and embark on other ventures. He purchased a Japanese farm from Seiji Yano plus some adjacent land and began rearing purebred Guernsey cattle. His 125-acre farm, originally called the Merrifield Stock Farm, with its huge barn was located on the north side of the Dewdney Trunk Road between 234<sup>th</sup> and 237<sup>th</sup> Streets. After several years Gilland phased out dairy farming and started up Berryland Canneries, a fruit and vegetable canning business that employed as many as 100 Japanese and Caucasian women during the peak fruit-picking season. The Japanese women especially valued this source of employment and worked hard.

Yasutaro Yamaga recalled what happened to Gilland's female Japanese employees:

After the strawberry season of 1939, canning of pears started. After paring the skin, splitting the pear in half and removing the core, the pear is packed in the can. This was contract work paying 15 cents per dozen cans. The contract pay was similar to that paid by the canneries in general. Men's wages at sawmills during this period were \$3.00 to \$4.00 per 8-hour day. The Japanese women were deft with their hands,

did not chatter, and because they were competing, some earned more than \$5.00 a day. On the average, they earned about \$3.00. After seeing that the women were making more than the men, Gilland must have thought he was overpaying. The following day, he reduced the contract pay by 5 cent/dozen. The women workers, eager to make up for the cut, worked even harder. Even with this cut, there were 1 or 2 women who made \$5.00. Thinking that he hadn't cut far enough, Garand [Gilland] cut the rate again by another 3 cent/dozen.

With this cut, some of the slower women made only about \$1.00/day. The workers negotiated with the foreman but Gilland's reply was a straight "no."—"The harder you work and your pay is cut in half. What kind of nonsense is this?" the workers screamed in Japanese. Their screams were louder than the machines. Everyone then sat down. The machines eventually stopped running. With this the company began to placate the women with soothing words, but they fell on deaf ears. The 50 Japanese and 35 Hakujiin women still sat down and didn't move.

It seems ironic that the man who only a few years earlier had travelled over to Vancouver Island to meet with the strawberry growers there and who defended the rights of

**Opposite**  
**The Berryland Cannery, circa 1950.**

his Japanese in the Pacific Berry Growers had now done an about-face and was taking advantage of his Japanese work force.

A short article about Berryland Dairy Farm appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* dated 29 November 1955:

Guernsey Bull Flies to Haney Buyer Vancouver (CP) ---First cattle shipment ever to come here by air arrived at Vancouver airport Saturday in a Trans-Canada Air Lines transport. It was an 11-month-old Guernsey bull, bought by E.M.Gilland, Haney, from Ideal Guernsey Farms, Augusta, New Jersey. The young animal came here by air from Toronto, after a 500-mile trip from his birthplace by train.

Both the cannery and the dairy farm operated and prospered through and past the Second World War. Gilland passed away in 1968 at the age of 69. According to newspaper references from later days, William S. Deacon & Associates purchased Berryland Dairy Farm from Gilland and incorporated it as "Berryland Cannery". Deacon sold the property to Cadbury-Schweppes of London, England, in 1974 apparently to expand and renovate but stayed on as manager. Deacon repurchased the property back from Cadbury-Schweppes in 1976.



## An Expensive Bull

*Stefan (Steve) Telep, who arrived in Haney with his parents in 1929, remembered Gilland:*

I was a mink farmer and had to go around to the various farms to pick up dead carcasses. Gilland called me one day to shoot this expensive bull that he'd imported from the States for breeding purposes. The poor thing had gotten arthritis in its front feet and had to be put down. Another time I went down and picked up a \$2,000 dead cow and its dead calf. He imported the cow too but she died giving birth to the calf. He had these two ferocious Doberman Pinschers that were constantly with him. My wife worked for him during the "pear strike."