

Doug Rogers Sr. and Jean Rogers  
July 17, 1997  
Interviewed by Nancy Solomon

Tape 1

Side A

Born in Brooklyn. Father and Grandfather were born in East Marion. Moved to Brooklyn during the Depression. Dad was a house painter. Moved back when Doug was born. Grandfather was a gentleman farmer. Doug worked on the bay for 35 years. Learned from Raymond Rackett – 3<sup>rd</sup> generation fisherman.

Clamming – hard and soft clams. 1930s harvested skimmer clams in shallow water. Used clam rake. Soft and hard clams were on bottom. Best in March. Skimmers – 5 square miles in Mattituck, Greenport and Southold. 50-60 bushels per day. Planted by baymen who used them for bait, which could be purchased in bait shops. Caught porgies and bluefish.

Oyster shop in Greenport. Campbell's soup company bought hard clams from a local bayman – went in Long Island Sound for chowders. Now they use skimmer clams. Soft clams – went at dead low tide – spotted by holes in sand – used clam rake. 5-6 bushels/day was a good catch – over 1-inch long. "Counts" – hard clams only. Few soft clams harvested commercially. Taken for friends and family. Scallops – major commercial crop. Best flavor. Spawn rises to surface of water for 3 days. Moves to bottom as it ages. Attaches to seaweed, stones, rocks, fishnets. Grow to quarter or half dollar size. Breaks off and swims up and down to eat. Drifts with tide. After 1- 2 years they die. Has growth ring on shell – 2 inches from hinge.

March – season ends naturally and officially. Hallocks Bay – best area for scallops. 5 -6 miles long, 2 miles wide, near State park. Undeveloped land. Town waters of Southold.

Few fulltime baymen – maybe 2 out of 100. Thousands went scalloping. Plum Island waters. Brought price down. Sold to Brauns before World War II. Were 40-50 years old. Terrells in Greenport.

Shucked scallops – needed license for a scallop shed by health department. Other buyers – Ellsworth Oyster Company, others bought scallops – shipped to NY, Philadelphia, Baltimore via railroad ice cars. Used sharpies, row boats. Sailboats earlier. Outboards used in early 1950s. In Greenport, East Marion, Orient most went to Hallocks Bay, Orient Harbor. Jean's grandfather – King –was a bayman. Others were farmers. Made nets out of cotton. Children helped. Today made of nylon. Doug's family helped shuck scallops. Sag Harbor – state waters – were busy. Ice blocked boats in winter.

Side B

Ice saws in channel 3 -4 feet wide during winter. Could not let scallops freeze so they only spent 1 hour harvesting scallops. Spent ½ hour sawing through ice. Used dredge pulled by hand. Jean helped. Doug also had a helper – split the money 50-50.

Friend almost drowned. Doug – once went to Robin’s Island “middle grounds.” Started back at 4 pm. Ice blocked him at point. Went back and stayed between ice flows. Saw a break to a nearby beach. Landed boat and walked back to truck.

Would start at daybreak and finish at sundown. Captain Jack Nielar – New Suffolk – went scalloping at Robins Island, sold to scallop shops in New Suffolk. Few fights.

Oystering – Doug was too young. Greenport was the major center. “Shells were 3 stories high.” Hundreds of feet wide. Piled where Mitchell’s restaurant used to be. Leased grounds to 15 companies. Planted shells and oysters liked white surfaces. Natural spawn. Shells went to Connecticut and visa versa. All were productive. 18 – 20 feet deep water. In Peconic Bay, Gardiners Bay, Orient Harbor, Upper Peconic Bay. One great spot near Bug Light (Orient) north of it. Has fish traps today. Oyster watchman guarded beds. Other spots – Marion Manor – 1000 feet offshore – flat beds, Greenport breakwater, 18 – 20 feet water off Shelter Island.

Clams did best in muddy waters, easy to work in. Used clam rakes. No commercial clambers – not enough to work full time.

Outboard motors are destroying the bay – oil on surface. Natural predators – starfish, horseshoe crabs. Pete’s Neck, Hallock’s Bay. Blacksmith – Paul, from Germany, moved to Greenport after World War I. Made dredges “for every bayman on Long Island.” Doug has a hand-forged dredge. Also collects. Light dredges, mud (chain across front) and sand dredges for scallops. Hard bottom dredges had blade across the front. Oyster dredges had blades –laid on top. Oyster companies did not hire baymen. Others worked for them in winter. Belief that summer oysters made you sick (not true). Hundreds worked for the companies. Women shucked. Some oyster companies in Southold and Mattituck.

“Scallop shanties” –women shucked. Near the water. Some still standing in New Suffolk on west side of marina on dirt road.

James Douglas – uncle – best known bayman in area. Lived in woods on Pete’s Neck.

Tape 2 – July 24, 1997  
Interviewed by Nancy Solomon

Side A

Was one of the first men hired to work on Orient State Park (James Douglas). Rowed, scalloped, harvested oysters. Good duck hunter. Favorite place was Hallock’s Bay. Good price for a little neck clam today is 20¢. Got 1¢ per clam in 1930s and 1940s. Summer residents went clamming. Few students did this. Great grandfather owned property from Hallocks Dock to

Hallocks Pond – included Pete’s Neck. Lost in Depression. Had to work then. Very wealthy. Became a painter. Doug’s father got him a job.

Uncle Jim knew every piece of the bay. Brown’s Point – had shanty. No car. Shanty was away from the shore – 25 to 30 feet. No waterfront homes then.

Doug kept his boat in creek north of Orient Yacht Club. 6 inches of water at low tide. Had a 20-foot boat. Once had a windmill on side of creek. Burned down.

Shellfish don’t like sandbars – exposed easily on full moons at northwest winds/low tide. No habitat – barren. Prefer marshlands. Grow fast in strong tides. Channel at Pete’s Neck. Grow fast and big. Had a pet raccoon. Locked up when he went to work at park. Had rabbits. Birds flew inside. Nature lover. Had a sloop. Divorced. Collected Indian artifacts. No Native Americans worked on the bay. Clam raked. Dam Pond on Gillespie Point. Cultivates ground if you work the same spot repeatedly. Set grew every 1 -2 years.

County dredges. Made roadway to Orient by dredging. 1938 hurricane destroyed it so they rebuilt it. Did not dredge for park. Orient Park built 1932-34.

Doug knew 40 – 50 baymen over the years. Not many full timers. 6 in each town. Last 50 years – outboards and more winter scallopers. Oystering was big business. No baymen made their living oystering. Shells dumped on oyster grounds – Orient harbor, Peconic and Noyac Bay – deep water, hard bottoms. Clams preferred shallow waters. Most baymen found their own spots.

## Side B

Waterfront development – Marina construction started after World War II. Natural weather cycles – northwest winds in Orient Harbor washed scallops ashore. Doug would shovel them into a truck.

“Duck” dum- butter clam. Ate by wild ducks. Found at Brown’s Point. Winkel pots for conch. Horseshoe crabs for bait. 3 -4 month season. Doug did not do this. 6 – 20 foot water. Fall season for harvesting.

Would drive harvest to New York City at times. 12 hour trip. Other jobs – truck driver, gas station, construction. 75 years old, born 1921.

Pound nets – dipped in tar twice a year. Paint stakes with copper. Pulled stakes out every year. Went to Sag Harbor for scallops. One hour by boat – motor. Shuckers paid by number of scallops opened – by the gallon. Shells stayed on land – used in driveways. Clam shells too.

End