

= McConnell Island =

McConnell Island is one of the San Juan Islands in San Juan County , Washington , United States . It is located less than 1 mile (1 @, @ 600 m) from the southwest end of Orcas Island . The island was the former private reserve of Thomas Gordon Thompson . A portion of it is currently a nature preserve .

= = Geography = =

The island has a land area of 12 @. @ 83 ha (31 @. @ 7 acres) with the southern part of the island rocky and elevated and the northern part covered by bigleaf maple and Western redcedar trees . It is the largest of the Wasp Island group , which includes Yellow Island , Reef Island , and others .

= = History = =

The island was originally known as Brown Island , named by Charles Wilkes for fourteen members of his United States Exploring Expedition crew who shared the same surname . It was later acquired by Victor McConnell , its first settler , who claimed squatters ' rights .

McConnell Island was purchased at the end of World War II by Thomas Gordon Thompson , a University of Washington professor and U.S. Army chemical warfare researcher who was later the namesake of the USNS Thomas Thompson and R / V Thomas Thompson . Thompson financed the purchase of the island through the sale of his valuable stamp collection and later built a home on it from native stone and driftwood . During his proprietorship of the remote island , Thompson used it to entertain friends and guests from the nearby Friday Harbor Laboratories . In one summer alone he received more than 700 visitors .

In 1997 a 3 @. @ 66 ha (9 @. @ 0 acres) portion of the island was transferred to the San Juan Preservation Trust , a private conservation organization , to be used as a nature preserve . What is known as the Thompson Preserve includes 985 feet (300 m) of protected shoreline as well as the original Thomas Thompson home . The rest of the island remains under private ownership .