



HERITAGE CORRIDOR

History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society

Volume 2 Issue 2 June 2004

Homesick for Sweden South Hill 1897

by the Swalander sisters, Dorothy Norris & Maudine Rushton

The tree pictured to the right is the result of two homesick young brothers who emigrated from Sweden in 1883. After moving to the Woodland area on South Hill in 1897, they wanted a reminder of their home and so the older brother, Carl Swalander, sent a letter to his father in Sweden asking him to send seeds of the Oxel tree (Swedish Whitebeam). The first tree was planted on Rheinhold Swalander's farm about 1898.

The first part of May it displays large clusters of creamy white flowers. Then in the fall these flowers turn to bright orangey-red berries. It seems the robins know exactly where these berries are and when they are ready to eat, because they converge by the flocks and by now these berries have fermented and it's "Party Time" for them. They flutter and flounder and quite often fly into the windows.

There had been a fence line on the pipeline west of the farmhouse that the birds rested on where their droppings were deposited. Consequently several Oxel trees grew in the straight line as if they had been purposely planted there.

Carl gave trees to friends in Eatonville, and they can be seen beside the road just before getting to town. He also donated a tree to be planted in



The Swalander sisters stand beneath the old Oxel tree where as little girls they played house around its base and swung from its large, low limbs.

Wright Park in Tacoma. Now these trees can be seen in Puyallup, Tacoma, Elma and many other areas.

The limbs grew in patterns that were great for climbing. After our dad, Oscar Swalander, took over the farm and we grew old enough to climb that wonderful tree, our protective dad would warn us, "Be careful - you'll fall and hurt yourself." This warning has been passed on to grandchildren and great grandchildren, as they all grew old enough to climb.

This old monarch is beginning to lose some of her limbs but still holds a very special place in the hearts of the Swalander descendants.

If you are interested, this tree (and many more) can be seen—call for directions 253-845-6744, Dorothy Norris, Maudine Rushton.



This house built sometime in the late 1800's became the Swalander family home when the Swalander brothers emigrated to South Hill in 1897. This has to be one of the oldest houses remaining on South Hill? Even though the original Swalander farm property has been subdivided over the years, the house is surrounded by huge old fir trees giving it a surprisingly quiet and peaceful setting on the bustling South Hill. The old Oxel tree blends in with surrounding trees right behind the forward crown of the roof line.

Along the driveway, entering the house, there are still rose bushes planted over 100 years ago (lower left).

South Hill Historical Society featured at Karshner Museum

Last May the Karshner Museum (309 Fourth St. N.E. Puyallup) featured a "Preservation Day." The South Hill Historical Society was well represented at this event. Preservation Day was an occasion to look back at the early pioneers and settlers of the Puyallup Valley area.

South Hill's pioneer descendants, Bill Goelzer, Olive McDonough, Mary and Don Glaser, dressed in period clothes and brought along early pictures of life on the Hill. SHHS President, Paul Hackett captured the occasion on videotape.



Herald photo/Shanon Burke

South Hill Historical Society members Olive McDonough & Bill Goelzer.



Herald photo/Heather Meier

South Hill Historical Society members Mary & Don Glaser.

Society members attend Northwest History Conference

Paul Hackett, our Society President, and Jerry Bates, Newsletter Editor, attended the 57th Annual Pacific Northwest History Conference held in Olympia last month. The Washington State Historical Society permanently sponsors this conference. This year for the first time the Northwest Archivists, the Northwest Oral History Association and the Pacific Northwest History Conference all met together as a single event.

The setting for the conference was the Olympia Red Lion Hotel. This was a three-day conference broken up into specialized sessions. For those such as Paul and Jerry not able to attend the whole three days, individual one-day and half-day workshops were available.

Paul attended "The Basics of Oral History" workshop that covered oral history project planning, research, equipment, interviewing techniques and legal and ethical considerations. As many of you may know, Paul has recorded video and audio interviews of many South Hill old timers in his passionate effort to preserve an oral history of early South Hill before its suburbanization.

Jerry Bates attended the "Basic Exhibit Design and Fabrication" workshop. This workshop covered design and layout techniques for those from historical societies who have little, or no, formal training or experience in preparing exhibits. This workshop was headed by Melissa Parr of the Washington State Historical Museum.

Any of our members interested in attending such upcoming events please notify Paul Hackett.

From The Treasurer

by Ben Peters

We welcome our newest members to the South Hill Historical Society:

Dorothy Gould
Andy Anderson
Wes & Suzy Perkinson
Bill Stover
Arthur & Luverne Foxford

Our membership is now at 53.
Many thanks to those who have renewed their membership!

June Renewal Calvin & Amy Goings
Richard & Joan Vosler

July Renewal Roy & Sheila Rinker
Vern Rockstad

August Renewal Helen Rohlman

September Renewal Hazel Whitford Miller
Goheen
Christopher O'Kelly
Betsy & Bill Stubbs
Neil & Celia Vincent

Do you have a story to tell about the past on South Hill? Please let us know. Personal experiences and past events are of interest to all the members, and it makes for a better newsletter too! We are glad to assist, if you wish, with writing or editing your article.

The Editor

More than one airport on South Hill

by Carl Vest, SHHS Vice President

When the subject of aviation on South Hill is brought up, most of us think of the current airport, known as Thun Field. After all, Thun Field has a documented history going back to 1944. But Thun Field was not the first aviation facility on South Hill.

Sometime before the development of Thun Field, a man by the name of Jimmy Sagmiller operated an aviation facility almost directly across Meridian Ave. from the present airport. Some have reported that the airstrip was oriented in an East-West direction, but others report the runway was oriented generally North-South, parallel to Meridian. Like the early Thun Field, Sagmiller's airstrip was a private facility.

Some people think Sagmiller operated a crop duster business serving the farmers in the various agricultural valleys around the area. But that has not been verified. Early newspaper accounts describe him as owning two airplanes, a four-passenger Cessna and a small Piper, both for charter purposes. These would not be crop-duster type aircraft.

An early newspaper article describes Sagmiller as having been a Major in the Chinese-American composite wing in China. The Chinese-American composite wing was a pre-WWII group of volunteers who went to China to fight the Japanese. It was the only air force the Chinese government had at the time. Eventually, when the US entered the war, it was absorbed into the US Army Air Force and ultimately became the Fourteenth Air Force, fighting the Japanese in China, Burma and India.

The South Hill Historical Society would like to learn more about Mr. Sagmiller and his aviation facility on South Hill. If any reader has any information, photos, or written material, please contact the Society so we can develop a more complete picture of this operation.

Meeting Reviews

by Carolyn Nelson, SHHS Secretary

At recent meetings several members have brought old treasures to show us, and copies of some early-day photos and documents have been donated to the SHHS collection. We are always grateful for any historic items which you would like to contribute as well as articles for the newsletter.

At the May meeting our group voted to accept the revision of the By-Laws presented by the officers. Certificates designed by Jerry Bates were presented to our charter members. Paul Hackett interviewed Dorothy Pearson Christy and her brother, Bill Pearson. They told great stories about growing up in the Firgrove area.

On June 15 the officers presented annual reports to mark the end of the fiscal year 2003-2004. Afterward Ben Peters set up a light lunch where we enjoyed reminiscing and sharing stories.

Watch for our display at the Puyallup Fair in the education building September 15, 16 and 17.

After our summer break we look forward to seeing everyone in September at our regular meeting on Tuesday, September 21.

In Passing

Roger Goelzer,
December 8, 1921 - March 16, 2004.

The South Hill Historical Society is grateful for Roger allowing us a video interview with him and his wife Wilma. We very much appreciate the gifts donated in his memory which substantially help our Society.

South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Home E-mail Address _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Renewal, check here

Annual Dues: Society membership \$25.00

Note Please do not send cash.

Make check or M.O. payable to South Hill Historical Society and mail with this application to:

SHHS Membership, 11711 92nd AV E, Puyallup, WA 98373

Where To Find Us

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month 11:15 AM at the Highlands in the Community Center **(no meetings July and August)**. This complex is located at 502 43rd AVE SE, adjacent to and east of the Mel Korum YMCA.

We welcome you to our monthly meetings. For more information contact our president, Paul Hackett, at **(253) 845-7691**.



South Hill Historical Society Officers

President, Paul Hackett
Vice-President, Carl Vest
Secretary, Carolyn Nelson
Treasurer, Ben Peters
Newsletter Editor, Jerry Bates

Our Current Members

Andy Anderson
John and Ruth Anderson
Jim and Elizabeth Anema
Bob Ballou
Jerry Bates
Ward F. Bradley
James H. Dixon
Mildred A. Dobbs
Arthur & Luverne Foxford
Lloyd Freudenstein
Don and Mary Glaser
William (Bill) Goelzer
Hazel Whitford Miller Goheen
Calvin and Amy Goings
Dorothy Gould
Paul Hackett
James Hawley
Cecil and Doris Herbert
Charles and Maybelle Hoenhaus
Ernest & Irene Hopp
Art Larson
Art S. and Marvella Massie
Olive McDonough
Laurienne Stewart Minnich
John A. Mosolf
Carolyn Nelson
Dorothy Nelson
Juanita Nordin
Mark and Dorothy Norris
Christopher O'Kelly
Don and Helen Otto
Wes & Suzy Perkinson
Ben Peters
Ella M. Reese
Bill Riley
Bernice Fisher Rinehart
Roy and Sheila Rinker
Vern Rockstad
Helen Rohlman
Frank Ryser
Bonnie Starkel
Lori Stock
Bill Stover
Betsy and Bill Stubbs
Margo L & Joe Tucci
Carl Vest
Neil and Celia Vincent
Richard and Joan Vosler
Vivian Wepfer
Pam and Don Williams
Christine Wilson
Kevin Wimsett
Marilyn Larson Winterton
Allen and Ellen Zulauf



11711 92nd AV E
Puyallup WA 98373

To: