

Hunt For History at Maplewood Springs

by Jerry Bates, South Hill Historical Society

Is the rumor true? Are there any visible remains of the trestle or wreckage from the “Old Line” electric trolley at Maplewood Springs?

Some background:

The Old Line trolley, TR&P Line (Tacoma Railway & Power Company), Puyallup’s first, operated from approximately 1889 to 1919. The trolley line started in Puyallup, then wound its way up the hill through Maplewood Springs (south of the Washington State Department of Game, Puyallup Fish Hatchery, see map) to 104 TH ST E and Woodland

followed what in later years would be Pacific Highway, US 99, which runs into Tacoma’s Puyallup Ave., then on to downtown Tacoma.

The era of electric trolleys came to an end in the late 1930’s when buses, that were more versatile and less expensive to operate, rapidly replaced trolleys, not to mention the ever-growing use of private automobiles over roads that were continually being improved.



The explorers: Left to right, Jerry Bates (SHHS), Mike Collins (Wash. Dept. of Game, Puyallup Fish Hatchery), Bill Goelzer (SHHS/Guide), Paul Hackett (SHHS) and Tad Thun (volunteer Guide), seen here at Maplewood Springs.

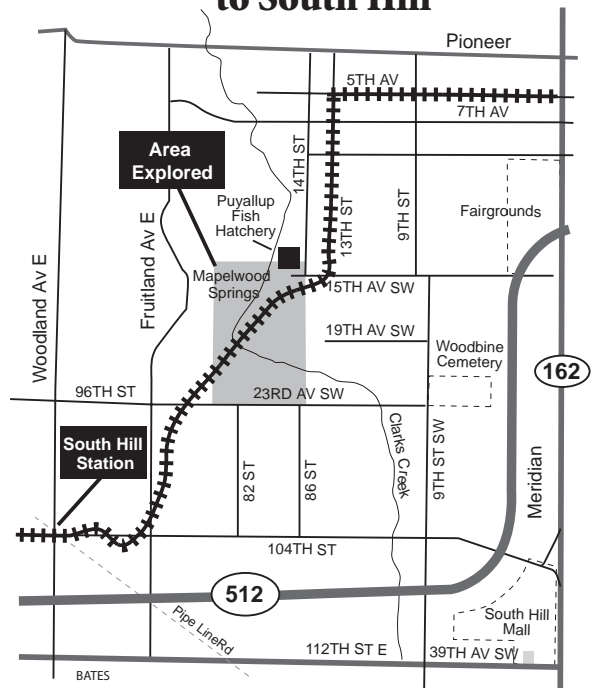
AV. This was the location of the trolley’s Woodland Station for South Hill passengers. From there it went west through Summit and Midland to Fern Hill and connected with the Tacoma/Spanaway trolley.

For residents of Puyallup and the Hill, it was, for a time, the only means of public transportation to Tacoma a very roundabout route for those living in Puyallup.

The part of the Old Line between Maplewood Springs and Woodland Station followed a path of least resistance to get from the valley floor to the top of the Hill. This path was the ravine that follows Clarks Creek. The trolley was notorious for its unsound accident-prone trestle that skirted along the treacherously steep ridge that climbs above the creek and the springs.

The Old Line was eventually replaced by the “Short Line”, the PSE (Puget Sound Electric Railway) which was a much more direct route to Tacoma for people in Puyallup. The Short Line electric trolley left Puyallup and crossed the Puyallup River, then went west through Firwood and on to a point west of Fife called Willow Junction. From there it

Route of the “Old Line” to South Hill



Research:

We must thank Paul Hackett for doing a lot of detective work locating maps of the Old Line route. Paul spent much time at the Washington State History Archives. He also made a valuable contact—Buzz Grant of Ticor Title Co., who lives on the old trolley route. Buzz furnished the Society a detailed map he made plotting the Old Line trolley route on a current street map of Puyallup and South Hill.

Paul also discovered an old Tacoma News Tribune article of a major derailment of freight cars using the trolley tracks in 1912. It was quite a wild story.

An engine car was pushing four heavily loaded freight cars up the Maplewood incline. As it neared the top it lost traction, the wheels were spinning due to grease and moisture on the rails. The engine car, now moving the train nowhere, was uncoupled from the freight cars it was pushing and raced in reverse down the hill hoping to gain as much distance as possible between it and the freight cars, following at ever increasing speed. The crew jumped off early. However, one of them evidently stayed along for the ride. The lead freight

car, now roaring downhill, had its brakes suddenly lock. The cars behind it jack-knifed and derailed, throwing a young James W. Kugel from the train fracturing his leg in two places. After nearly being killed, Kugel made a splint for his leg enabling him to walk from the wreckage and the unstable embankment that, shortly after he left, gave-way taking the cars 100 feet to the bottom of the gulch.

Our Hike:

A date was finally set among those interested members of the Society to explore Maplewood Springs for remains of the trestle and wreckage.

Lucky for us, we had two excellent guides, Bill Goelzer, a society member, and Tad Thun. Both knew the area well, going back to their childhoods.

Today Maplewood Springs is controlled and maintained by the Puyallup Fish Hatchery as a protected watershed. The property we cover in this story is restricted from public access. Paul had to receive permission from the city of Puyallup before we could enter.

We gathered at the Hatchery on a pleasant June morning, 6/12/04. The group consisted of: Paul Hackett, Bill Goelzer, Tad Thun and yours truly, Jerry Bates. We also gained an unexpected addition to our team, Mike Collins who works and lives at the hatchery; he was willing to join us on our trek. Mike was a source of much information regarding the management and challenging work done to maintain the watershed over the years. The Clarks Creek gorge area has been exposed to fires, flooding and landslides.

The first part of our venture was deceptively easy, a short walk along an access road behind the hatchery. This took us to the very picturesque Maplewood Springs.

So much for the easy part—let’s just say, from this point on our guides and our stamina counted more than anything else.

I could not make out any sign of a trail as Bill Goelzer started hacking into a wall of undergrowth. When we did come on a “trail” it was very rudimentary. This was no pleasure walk! At the bottom of the ravine we waded through the mud and water of the creek bottom, climbing over downed trees across our path. Then we started a mostly vertical ascent. The foliage was dense on both sides of our route. While hacking nettles out of our way, we continued to climb. This ravine is more like a tropical jungle than anything I’ve seen locally. Closely packed leafy vegetation and trees of every local variety with some things growing in there I’ve never seen before.

The most interesting discovery for me personally was a huge centuries-old Douglas fir along the trail’s edge (see photo). These monsters once covered all of South Hill prior to being logged-off in years around 1900. I’ve never seen a surviving Douglas fir anywhere around Puyallup to match this one. Remains of these great firs (the stumps) can still be found on the Hill, but they’re vanishing fast. Many members of the society remember a South Hill covered with nothing but these huge stumps, a nuisance in those days to be removed; most of them were dynamited or burned.

Well, back to the object of our adventure—discovering remains of the trestle/wreckage. Sadly, we didn’t come across anything obvious, other than perhaps a part of one of the original rails sticking from the ground? Not positive however. Let me say, minus the thick foliage and unstable nature of the banks along the creek, there could easily be, and no doubt are, remains we were looking for. However, all is now buried or hidden from view. We’re not digging-up the watershed to find them. May they rest in peace.

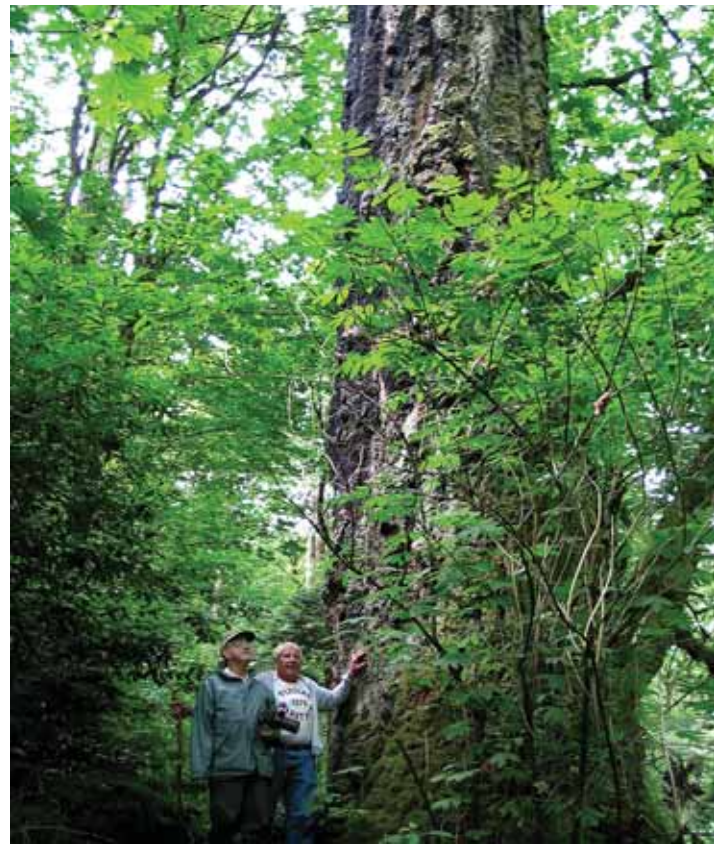
We reached the top of the area that surrounds the watershed; it borders on 23RD AV E or formerly 96ST E and made our way back by a more direct “downhill” route to the hatchery.

We may not have made any exciting discovery, but just being in such an area, untouched by the surrounding suburbs, had its rewards and made for a fun morning.

To sum-up:

The rumor has more or less been resolved, to our regret, we could find no visible remains of a trestle or wreckage at Maplewood Springs.

If any of our members, or anyone reading this, can supply any additional information on the Puyallup Old Line trolley or any living family member of James W. Kugel, please get in touch with the Society.



One that missed the axe! This ancient Douglas fir, discovered along the trail, is typical of trees that covered South Hill up to around the year 1900. Pictured: Paul Hackett & Bill Goelzer.



Thanks to member Dorothy Norris for this picture of the Old Line making its way up the Hill.

SHHS Puyallup Fair-2004

Last year we, with many other historical societies, took part in the Pierce County Heritage League exhibit at the Fair Museum.

This year we had three days in the Education Building. We gathered some valuable historical information from fair goers attracted to our new display, built by Jerry Bates.

We would like to thank those members who volunteered their time as docents/hosts at the display, with special thanks to Olive Parks McDonough and Joan Vosler:

Jerry Bates	Carolyn Nelson
Karen (Parks) Day	Don & Helen Otto
Art and LuAnn Foxford	Ben Peters
Lloyd Freudenstein	Bonnie Starkel
Paul Hackett	Sheila Rinker
Don and Mary Glaser	Bernice Rinehart
Bill Goelzer	John Thun
Olive Parks McDonough	Joan (Parks) and Richard Vosler

This kind of **active** participation in our society's programs and tasks is very critical for our success and very much appreciated!

New information learned at the Fair:

Diny (Thun) Robinson, daughter of John Thun, grew up in a home still on Thun Field. She told us of her grandmother, Mary (Blow) Shaw, who is part of the family for whom Shaw Road is named. The Shaw homestead is still there, 80 years old, at the north end of Shaw Road on E. Pioneer Way.

A daughter or granddaughter of the Breckon family lives in Orting. Bonnie Nicolet Starkel is getting us her name. The whole South Hill area was in the Breckon precinct in 1930. The Breckon's lived on Fruitland Avenue.

Laura Jobe, of Graham, gave us many names of old streets in the area: Howe, Bath, McDonald, Carlson.

Charlie Cates, of Graham, told of the Black Horse Tavern north of 112th and Meridian, now the Target parking lot.

Turlulu Breland used to live where the Food Court in the South Hill Mall is now.

In the 1940's, Bonnie Nicolet Starkel says that the Bonneville Power people paid a small sum for the easement over the Jacob (Senior) Conrad Starkel dairy land.

Edna (Kerwin) Webster, who moved to Woodland Av in 1933, remembers that her father brought water home from a spring at 112th St and 94th Av (Costco) area. Her mother helped form Fruitland Mutual Water Company.

Fred Fritz grew up on 122nd St in the Rabbit Farms area and remembers ruts in the front yard (from the Naches Trail?).

Bill (William) Scott, born off Shaw Road, now of Vancouver, 82, told us his mother was part of the Gunder family that have lived in this area for five generations.

John Soper, Seattle, remembers Henn's Flowers on 112th St, grown and sold there.



Seated Richard and Joan Vosler, standing Paul Hackett



Bonnie Nicolet Starkel & Bill Goelzer

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.

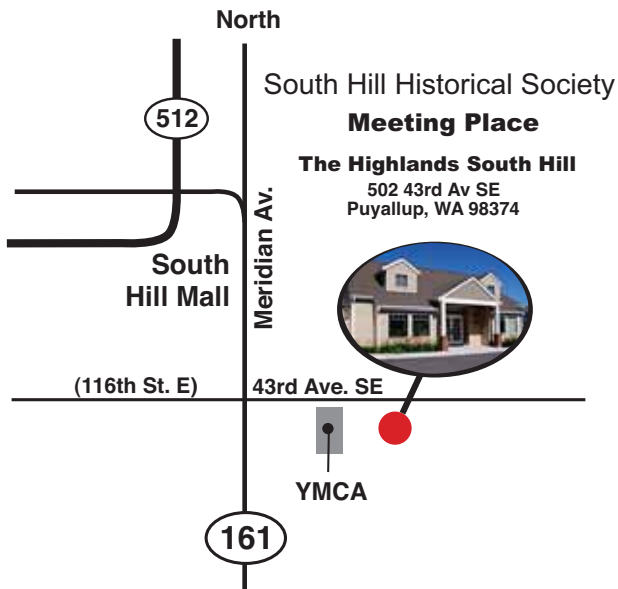
Make check or M.O. payable to South Hill Historical Society and mail with this application to:

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



11711 92nd AV E
 Puyallup WA 98373

From The Treasurer

by Ben Peters

A warm welcome to our newest members:
 Clara K. Slinger (Wallace) of Sun City West, AZ
 Karey Hanks of St. Anthony, ID
 Pierce County
 Lenore Nicolet Winton

Members due for RENEWAL:

Juanita Nordin - August
 Helen Rohlman - August
 Hazel Goheen - September
 Christopher O'Kelly - September
 Betsy/Bill Stubbs - September
 Neal/Celia Vincent - September
 Lori Stock - October
 Margo/Joe Tucci - October
 Allen Zulauf - October

Our Current Members

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

To: