

The George and O'Kelly families on Mitchell-Gould Road

Prepared by Carl Vest, Member, South Hill Historical Society

By the time of World War II (WWII) the population on South Hill had increased significantly, relative to earlier periods. However, even as late as this wartime era, the Hill was still considered country. Significant stands of second growth trees were maturing in many places and to a casual observer the Hill seemed forested. But by this period logging was no longer a primary labor activity. Rather, various types of farming and farming support occupations were now the main economic thrusts.

And, it was in the early 1940s that the George family moved onto the Hill, buying and settling on a 40 acre plot fronting on what is now 152nd St (then known as Mitchell-Gould Road), at its juncture with 94th Avenue (current designation). One youngster in that family was a young lady named Gloria George. She later married Chris O'Kelly and they still live on a portion of that original family farm. Chris and Gloria have graciously agreed to describe a few aspects of the local world they remember by having lived on the Mitchell-Gould Road for a long time.

Gloria explains that her family's house and property was on the south side of Mitchell-Gould Road and was six-tenths of a mile west of Meridian. The land was bought from a Mr. J. H. Turnmire. Earlier the land had been part of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company holdings.

Gloria remembers that when she was young the family lived in a typical farmhouse, had an open garage, and a fairly good-sized barn. When her folks initially bought the property they also inherited "Grandma," a jersey cow, in the deal. And, during WWII Mrs. George sold milk and butter that

she made from milk produced by that cow. Also during the early days the family kept two riding horses.

Gloria's recollection from her childhood is that the road now known as 94th Avenue was really nothing more than a dirt "path." The local people didn't often use it. This was because very few families lived by it, and additionally the roadbed was almost always in extremely bad shape --- consisting primarily of mud, ruts and muddy potholes. She feels that today a road like that would be an ATV rider's dream.

Interestingly, Gloria collects major water problems during the early days on their farm. Not too much water as you might think, but rather not enough. She recalls that when her father bought the farm, there was a producing water-well on the property. It was about 30 feet deep. The family was not accustomed to conservation, however, having been urban dwellers before they moved to the Hill, and so they proceeded to draw down the reservoir faster than it could be replenished by nature. As a consequence they eventually had to haul water from a source located at the intersection of Collins Road (now 128th Street) and Meridian. That site was a country store owned by a Mr. Lyman and was located alongside the Tacoma City water line, running from its reservoir on South Hill to the City of Tacoma. Gloria recalls that her father, Mr. George, would go to the store, fill two fifty-gallon barrels, and then haul them home for family use. This transported liquid was also the only source of water for the family's animals. Chris notes that there were actually several wells on the old farm; at least five that he remembers. Most were



Gloria and Chris O'Kelly, long time residents of the old Mitchell-Gould Road (152ND ST E).



Today's busy intersection of 152 ND ST E (Mitchell-Gould Road) and Meridian.

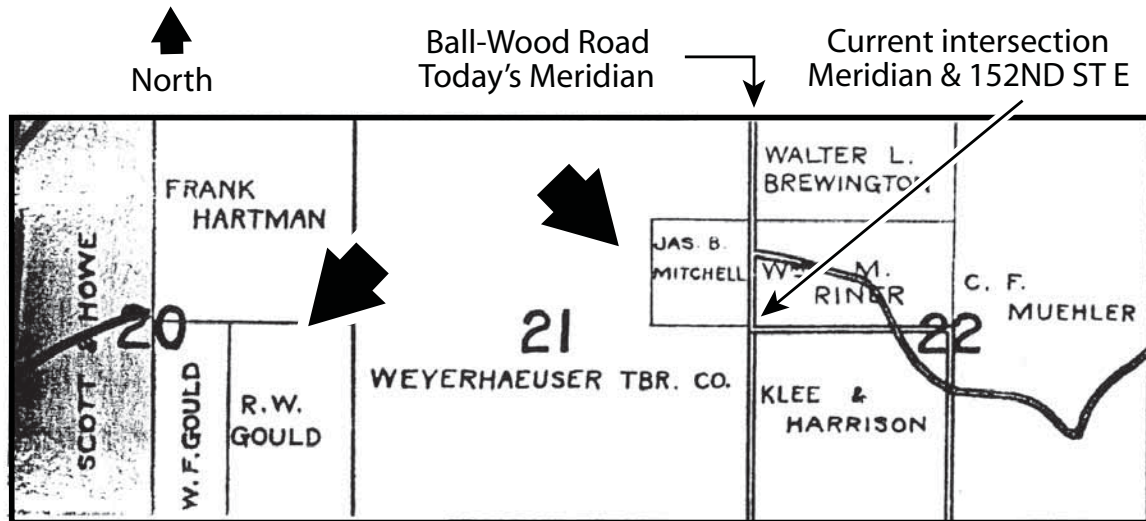
dry. One was at least 50 feet deep. In some you could hear running water but could never reach it.

There were few families living in this vicinity in the 1940s. So when going to school the local children all walked to Meridian to catch school buses. During that period the Firgrove School offered education in grades one through eight. So Firgrove was the initial introduction to schooling by most of the local youngsters. After finishing there, and in order to continue learning, it was necessary to transfer to the high school in Puyallup, where classes started with the ninth grade and went through the 12th. Gloria recalls that when going to school during WWII she rode in a double-deck bus operated by the Blue Gray Line. However, that

the late 1960s when Gloria's mother sold the other 30 acres. Chris O'Kelly is a native of Eatonville and a 1942 graduate of Eatonville High School.

The O'Kellys believe that the only prominent business activity in the Mitchell-Gould corridor during the 1940s was a dairy located at its western end. It was known as the Gould Dairy and prospered for many years. That dairy land holding is what we now know as the Blyton Farm. The property is presently being developed into a major housing project.

The origin of the name Mitchell-Gould Road is not entirely clear. But it appears to have been named for two early landowners, one located at each end



This view of a 1924 county map shows the Gould and Mitchell properties with no road between them.

transportation practice was altered after the war years. The students still continued to ride buses operated by a private company for a while, but the procedure was changed when the Puyallup School District was consolidated with a number of the local and smaller districts. Gloria is a 1947 graduate of the Puyallup High School.

Gloria still fondly remembers some of the recreational activities young people tried during the winter. For example, she recounts specifically one of the things they did when it got cold enough for the local water ponds to freeze. When these conditions were discovered, the local kids would get together and go to the Massey Pond where they would play games on the ice. The Massey Pond was a well-known water hole near current 110th Avenue and 152nd Street. When it was frozen those who had sleds would take them on the ice. The boys would pull the sleds as fast as they could, swing them around and around and then let go. It was a kind of "crack the whip" sport played on ice. Gloria's comment about this was, "What a great time we all had!"

When she married Chris O'Kelly, Gloria's family gave them ten acres of land from the original 40 acres they owned. It was located on the eastern end of the original farm. This parcel contains a mine, which Chris notes was a source of gravel used for one of the many upgrades of Meridian Avenue. Chris and Gloria built their own house on this land and moved into it during December 1954. They still live at the same location. Gloria's family continued to live on the original farm until

of the original route when it was built. County records show that the thoroughfare was established in 1925. At first the path was only about a mile in length, stretching east-west across the center part of Section 21, in Township 19. The distance was significantly extended in 1931 when the lane was lengthened to the west and connected with what is now Canyon Road (then known as Malcolm-McLarty Road). The O'Kellys recall that the Mitchell-Gould Road was little more than a narrow, gravel surfaced path in the 1940s. Chris declares that in the 1950s no more than a dozen cars a day would travel the route.

The O'Kellys hope you enjoy this brief presentation about their home area. It's not a complete history, but hopefully it will trigger memories for others who live or have lived on the Hill.

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



From the President:

Paul Hackett

Our annual meeting is coming up on June 20, 2006, and we have a Nominating Committee working. It is especially important this year because I, Paul Hackett, president for the first five years, have decided that I would rather work in the research of South Hill history than to continue as president. Please let Bill Goelzer, chairperson of the Nominating Committee, know of your nominations.

Meridian Bus Stop Shelter Art

Our historical society is collaborating with Emerald Ridge and Rogers high schools in an art project to create illustrations of historical happenings on South Hill. These pictures will be etched on the walls of 19 bus stop shelters to be constructed along Meridian Avenue.

A request came to us from Sheri Bails, a professional artist who is a member of our society and co-chair of the South Hill Community Council. We were asked to furnish the high school art teachers with material on the early days, which students could use to design motifs for the end panels of certain Pierce Transit bus stops. We responded and also decided to give recognition certificates or plaques to the students whose artwork has been selected. The projects will soon be completed. We will keep our readers up to date as we hear more.



Looking Ahead

The South Hill Historical Society will be part of the Puyallup Fair again this September. Our booth will be in the Pavilion Education complex (right inside the Gold Gate entrance). We will have two sessions, September 8th and 9th and again on the 17th and 18th. As done last year, we are asking our membership for volunteers to man (woman) our booth. This is your chance to get involved promoting our organization and letting people know about history on the hill!

Volunteering has its rewards!

All volunteers get free exhibitor's gate passes, plus free parking and shuttle service. Why not plan on an exciting day at the fair, in addition to pulling a shift manning our booth.

Don't miss this chance to experience a memorable event. Sound good? Get hold of Bill Goelzer, our Fair team leader—organizer—coordinator, at 253-841-4149

South Hill Historical Society Officers

- President, Paul Hackett
- Vice-President, Don Glaser
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History On The Hill is published quarterly
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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

From The Treasurer

by Ben Peters

A warm welcome to our newest members:

Eunice Barth Gilliam
Bob Crabb
David Hackett
Matt Holm

What's New?

We have purchased a new sound system! This is our first big expense (asset). The system has a 10", 75-watt speaker, a regular wired microphone, a cordless microphone (no more trying to strangle our meeting members with a corded mike) and a 40-watt amplifier. Our cost came to \$332—a good deal. After trial runs with other more expensive systems, this one fit our needs now and for the future.

We thank president Paul for the use of his own system the past few years.

Reminder

Please don't forget that we are a 501(C) (3) non-profit organization. Dues, donations, etc. are fully deductible from your income taxes, if you are able to do so.

Where To Find Us

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month 11:15 AM (*No meetings July and August*) at the Highlands in the Community Center . 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**.



11711 92nd AV E
Puyallup WA 98373

Our Current Members

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John & Ruth Anderson
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