

New historical signs mark the Heritage Corridor



Society members Terry Maves and Beverley Zook, with Pierce County maintenance supervisor Steve Martin and fabricator Dennis Mitchell are all proud of the new Heritage Corridor markers. The new signs resemble the old design but with the addition of a color map plus many other improvements adding to their longevity.

WE'RE happy to announce the replacement of all old markers signs along our South Hill Heritage Corridor. All eight new markers are in place, including two long-missing signs. The signs were first installed in 2002 thanks to the South Hill Historical Society and the work of the Society's Research Historian, Carl Vest and (then) Pierce County Councilman, Calvin Goings. The South Hill Heritage Corridor was officially recognized in that year.

Over the years, the old plywood signs slowly deteriorated and the Pierce County Sign Shop noticed the signs were in poor condition and

needed replacement — an issue we brought to their attention in addition to the missing markers. The county checks all signs quarterly and realized the old trail markers were beyond cleaning or repair. They needed replacing as well as upgraded pole mountings. Working with our Society, an effort was launched to replace all the historical markers along the Heritage Corridor.

Problems

Our trail markers are not the usual county signs as the County did not make them and each is unique. County signs are composed of similar materials with the same metal backing, background color, font style, and layout format consistent

with national standard highway guidelines. The County Sign Shop has only the technology and materials for making this type of sign. They had no means to reproduce the trail marker signs that were created with unique artwork and lettering. Since our signs were beyond their capability to reproduce, a vendor was needed that could create new signs using the old markers as a guide.

Records of the original creation of the markers were lost over the years. There was no firm information as to the maker or even if they were still in business. So, the county maintenance supervisor, Steve Martin, set to work. The price to reproduce these unique signs became an issue; some

quotes were so costly that the signs could be done only incrementally over time to fit within budget constraints. However, the goal was to replace all of the signs during one upgrade effort. Steve continued his search, finding a vendor in Auburn with a competitive quote — a price that allowed replacement of all the signs in one process, thus saving taxpayer dollars.

New Signs Made to Last

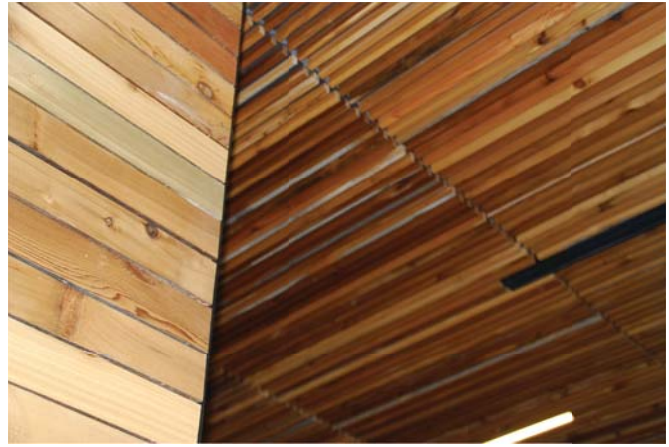
The new markers replicate the originals and, at first glance, they look exactly the same. However, the new signs are all metal with a Plexiglas shield to protect the surface from tagging (e.g., spray paint *graffiti*) or other damage. The Plexiglas was recycled from older signs for additional cost savings. If our signs need replacing, duplicates have been made for a quick fix. The new signs are 'printed' on metal backing. The primary cost is the initial creation of artwork and layout; copies can then be printed at a fraction of the initial setup cost.

The original 4x4 cedar mounting posts also needed replacement. In 2013, a new utility law went into effect. To conform to the new rules, the county is in the process of replacing old cedar posts with metal poles. Each new pole is attached to a buried, vandal-proof hardware anchor set in concrete, eliminating the need to dig future post-holes when signs are damaged or replaced.

We are assured that our new signs are made to last! The new design ensures the maintenance and quick replacement, if necessary. Most importantly to the Society, our hard work to educate and inform the public of South Hill's pre-suburbia history continues.



Where county signs are made: the new county sign shop within the Sewer & Traffic Operations facility on South Hill.



This image shows accent wall and ceiling surfaces in the new Sewer & Traffic Operations (STOP) facility at 94th AV E. Cedar slats cut from old cedar signposts (being replaced countywide) are repurposed to decorate interior and exterior wall surfaces.

The Bonney Lake Historical Society addresses the SHHS

Our Society welcomed Glenn and JoAnn Taylor from the Greater Bonney Lake Historical Society as guest speakers for our November General Meeting. While Glenn spoke, JoAnn ran the projector giving us a look at their organization's many activities plus the history of the Bonney Lake plateau.

Like our Society, one of their early projects was erecting historical markers locating eleven historical signs in and around Bonney Lake. The historic Naches Pass Trail crosses their community before it descends in the Puyallup Valley and onto South Hill. Some of our members may recall the 2012 Tour of the Trail, hosted by their society. The tour followed the 1853 Longmire-Biles wagon train path from Buckley to the Puyallup River, stopping at historical locations along the way. Glenn told the story of the historic route, beginning with the Native Americans' use of it to unite tribes of the Plains and Puget Sound as well as its later use by the Hudson Bay Company traders. Lt. Robert Johnson recorded the first crossing of the Trail in 1841 during an exploratory expedition for the U.S. government.

In 1853, the Longmire-Biles wagon train brought

the first white families to the South Puget Sound area. Glenn described an old, now disassembled, trading cabin located on the Trail believed to have belonged to the Hudson Bay Company; it's currently in storage at Buckley. The 1855 Indian Wars started in the Bonney Lake's back yard at Connell's Prairie. For members interested in a more detailed history, the Greater Bonney Lake Historical Society member, Winona Jacobsen, has authored *Bonney Lake's Plateau, a history of Bonney Lake*. Our Society purchased a copy that members may borrow.



Glenn Taylor – Bonney Lake Historical Society

Glenn provided an update on more current activities. The City of Bonney Lake has acquired the Frazer house and property, which includes the scenic Victor Falls on Fennel's Creek, now a park open to the public. Plans are to make the house a museum. Their society also played a role—along with the Boy Scouts — in cleaning up and re-naming the forgotten Dieringer Cemetery. The scout troop discovered the headstones while on an outing. The land has since been donated by its owners and renamed the Lake Tapps Pioneer Cemetery. Glenn described many other community activities in which they participate or sponsor.

The Milotte Estate

Two of Bonney Lake's more noteworthy residents were the nature film photographers Alfred and Elma Milotte. The Bonney Lake Historical Society was given 65 boxes of the couple's films, photographs, and journals from their estate. The Milottes won six Academy Awards while working for Walt Disney. Their work included the films *Bear Country*, *Beaver Valley*, *Seal Island*, *The Alaskan Eskimo*, *Nature's Half-Acre* and *Water Birds*. Walt Disney kept them busy from Alaska to the Ev-

erglades including Australia and Africa where they spent three years filming *The African Lion*. They also filmed sequences for Alfred Hitchcock's movie *The Birds*. They died a few days apart in 1989 — Elma was 81; Alfred was 84.

The society is busy cataloging the items from the estate. The Society has sponsored film festivals showing the Milotte work; the fourth one was held last October. Glenn gave a short biography of their lives in Alaska and Washington along with adventures from their journals. They lived with the animals they photographed, including lions, virtually unarmed. They fired only one bullet in all their years of filming — and that was to dispatch a suffering animal.

Our historical society friends on the Bonney Lake Plateau are a very busy group! If you couldn't make it to the November meeting, the entire presentation is available on DVD. Contact SHHS President Bob Ballou, mail.southhillhistory.com.

Pierce County Council Vice Chairman



Dan Roach

Also attending our November general meeting was Pierce County Council Vice Chairman Dan Roach. Dan represents District 1, a large area of northeastern Pierce County, which includes Bonney Lake and most of South Hill. Dan lives in Bonney Lake. He attended our presentation to

update himself on his community's local history and the Bonney Lake Historical Society's current projects. Dan said, "My mother was a history major... and I really do enjoy history." He reminded our gathering that Pierce County has approximately \$150,000 available for various grants to support historical projects (with approval by an advisory committee.)

Member Book Reviews

Carl Vest starts this article with his review of the New York Times #1 best seller *The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey*, by Rinker Buck. Debbie Burtnett follows comparing Buck's book with another she recently read *Ox Team Days* by Ezra Meeker.

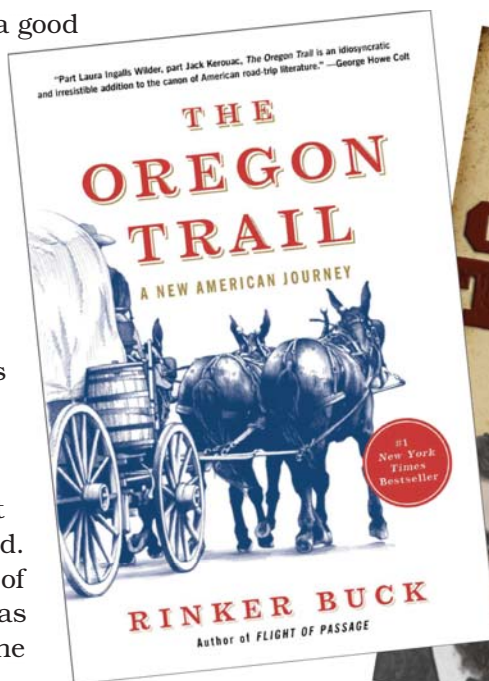
The Oregon Trail Review by Carl Vest

A more appropriate title for this book might be "Traveling Part of the Oregon Trail by Mule and Covered Wagon." The book descriptions and the journey made by the author don't include the entire Trail but generally ends just inside the State of Oregon border at Baker City. Thus, about 20 percent of the old trail is not covered.

The author does a good

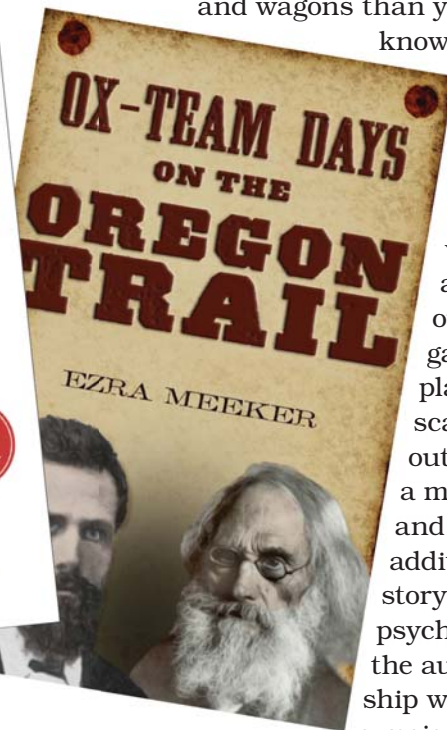
job of describing his own actions on the eastern part of the journey as experienced by his travel and those of the pioneers. The technique of telling his actions and then using flashback to connect these to the earlier immigrant trains is very good. One gets a sense of the ordeal that was encountered by the travelers and the uncertainties they faced. However, this is spotty and does not cover the entire trip. The author does a good job of explaining the makeup of the trail; e.g., why there was never a single set of ruts.

The coverage of the western part of the trail, after South Pass, is not very complete. It seems the author just ran out of ways to describe what was being experienced. The chapters are shorter and the descriptions less clear. He justifies stopping at Baker City by declaring that ahead there were too many farms to try to get permission to cross. Yet, this did not deter him up to that point. Thus, a reader is not able to appreciate conditions and similar travel along the Columbia River into Oregon City. This lack of completeness is signifi-



cant. True, he did get to Oregon, but he did not complete the Oregon Trail in that state.

Reading this account gives the reader an understanding of wagons, mules, the handling of both over difficult terrain and some of the human interactions that were required to move vehicles along the routes. You learn more about mules and wagons than you ever wanted to know.



In my opinion there are two major shortcomings in this writing. First, and most obvious, is the vulgar language in places—actually scattered throughout the book. This is a major distraction and an unwanted addition to a serious story. Secondly, the psychobabble about the author's relationship with his father is a major agitation. Who

cares?! Maybe writing the book was a form of therapy. If so, the focus should be different.

This is not a book I would recommend widely. It's not bad, but it's not good either. Those parts about wagons and mules are worthwhile. Much of the rest is not.

The Oregon Trail & Ox-Team Days Review by Debbie Burtnett

Ox-team Days on the Oregon Trail is Ezra Meeker's tome documenting his crossing of the Oregon Trail in 1852 and his reverse trips in 1906-08.

Editor Michal Trinklein has illustrated (with maps and photos and paintings by William Henry Jackson) and explained Meeker's colloquialisms throughout Meeker's biography in Trinklein's (self-published) 2013 edition. (Some of our readers may recall the 1958 *Look* magazine story about Buck's family traveling by wagon to "See America Slowly.") The brothers, Rinker and Nicholas, adopted the slogan again as they crossed the Oregon Trail.

While Rinker Buck taught us much about selecting mules and building wagons for a modern-day crossing, Ezra Meeker kept a journal of his original journey and his reverse journeys and it is interesting to compare the two versions. Meeker described his early life in the Old Northwest Territory and his family's values; his marriage to Eliza Jane; and described daily life throughout his long life. He did not, as did author Buck, dwell upon his life's sorrows such as the loss of family members or 'father issues.' Unlike the foul language used in Rinker Buck's conversations, Meeker noted in his journal the habit of drivers swearing at their oxen to encourage them to work. He stated that "father wouldn't let me swear at them...I...always talked to my oxen in a conversational tone and used the whip sparingly." Using oxen on the Plains was better in terms of strength, feeding, and "Indians could not run them off at night as easily as they could horses."

Meeker's book (and Mr. Trinklein's notations) are like a trip through a history book—Trinklein even compares Ezra Meeker with Forrest Gump (who just happened into events of historic significance) including knowing Abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher and delivering his Free Soil newspaper as one of his first jobs. Perhaps it's no wonder that Meeker would grow into a compassionate, fair-minded adult who supported Native American rights in his life. Meeker recalled the presidential election campaign of 1844 when he published sheet music as a journeyman printer. He sang the songs to crowds and sold all of the copies he had—his innate business sense surfaced throughout his life to earn (and lose) at least two fortunes.

Both Meeker and Rinker Buck described the difficulties of traveling; including how the pioneer lightened heavy loads of unnecessary items including beds, blankets, quilts, and eventually, "stacks of flour and bacon being the most

abundant—all left as common property." Meeker said you helped yourself to hundreds of tons of goods. Editor Trinklein writes: "A lighter wagon could make a big difference...could increase the speed to 2 MPH...makes a big difference over four months of travel." While on the Great Plains, when Meeker's group needed water, they took it from the muddy rivers, boiling it to rid it of sediment. This paid off in saving them from the cholera epidemic that killed so many pioneers.

Meeker described the migration "at its height... an unbroken column fully five hundred miles long." He estimated the number of emigrants at 350,000 from 1843-57, which editor Trinklein said was "about right." Historians estimate total migration at half a million from 1843-1869. Both Rinker Buck and Ezra Meeker noted the records of graves compiled by pioneers as they crossed the Trail in 1852. Mrs. Cecelia McMillen Adams's records were published by the Oregon Pioneer Association confirmed a death rate of about 10% in the year 1852.

Although difficulties in traveling in a wagon on steep grades, etc., can be compared by the two authors, in no way can Rinker Buck's experience on his crossing of the Trail compare to the scenes Meeker witnessed such as the "wholesale slaughter" of buffalo and loss of land that necessitated the tribes fighting back. Meeker experienced a buffalo stampede, which Rinker Buck could not. Crossing the Snake River was an experience for both men, and Buck grittily details crossing Rocky Ridge in Wyoming with his brother Nick at the reins, crediting him in his book for a successful trip due to his driving and mechanical skills. The book is dedicated to him. Rinker Buck, however, didn't make it to the Columbia River as his journey ended at Baker City, OR. Evident in Buck's work is his extensive research while Editor Trinklein does a good job in explaining the more archaic meanings of terms such as backlog, towhead, 'bound out,' and other aspects of 19th century pioneer life.

It was good to read about the achievements of the Oregon-California Trail Association (OCTA) in Rinker Buck's work, which includes the constant repair, and maintenance of the Meeker Markers (30+ monuments and over 100 wooden markers) on the Trail. Their work with identifying and respectful reburial of pioneer remains is also noted. Rinker Buck paid homage to Meeker in Chap-

ter 12, crediting him with marking the Trail for posterity and dreams of a transportation network connecting national parks, roads, and big cities and even spur roads. Meeker did not live to see his vision realized under the Progressive Era.

Early in his work, Buck touched upon one of the modern problems of our day—grandparents raising kids in the Midwest due to the meth drug epidemic and the Great Recession in America. I couldn't help but compare Ezra Meeker's world—upbringing (i.e., unspoiled) and life's decisions (to migrate with wife and family) with our own 21st century world. Excuses had no place in Meeker's 19th century America. It seems that modernity has created a more helpless, whining, self-centered citizenry who have no stamina physically and mentally as did our pioneer forebears.

DVDs Available

We have a vast library of VCR tapes that have been individually converted to DVD discs. They can be viewed on televisions or home computers with CD/DVD players/drives. Most General Meetings are video recorded by Bob Ballou. Our speakers receive a free DVD of his or her presentation. Additional DVDs can be purchased for \$3.00 each.

Our DVD archives also includes many years of interviews with South Hill people of interest. All DVDs are available for borrowing by SHHS members.

For a list, contact Paul Hackett.
phackettyes@comcast.net
253-845-7691

Good-by to Hilltop Service



Steve Thompson, seated, presented Paul Hackett and the South Hill Historical Society with a laminated version of the South Hill Fun Map. The map is historically significant in that it was printed in the 1980s featuring businesses then along Meridian Avenue. Steve was invited to the November meeting in recognition of his years of business on the Hill. Steve told us of his years running Hilltop Service Inc. (auto repairs) and the changes he has witnessed on the Hill. His business closed last October 31st after 58 years of operation. The familiar garage sitting on the crest of the Hill at 3002 S. Meridian will be missed by many. Steve took over the shop in 1972 and has served three generations of customers—"friends," said Steve. He's looking forward to retirement and is relocating to Ocean Shores.

Do you have something you would like to share relating to South Hill? family history, a current event, announcement?

Subjects from fellow members, makes for a better newsletter! We are glad to assist with writing or editing.

Contact Jerry Bates
mail@southhillhistory.com

From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Please call, e-mail or write any change of address to me, Ben Peters, 253-845-7028, poppa-ben2002@yahoo.com, 14602 106th Avenue Court E., South Hill, WA 98374.

Also, 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. If you need a receipt for tax purposes, contact Ben.

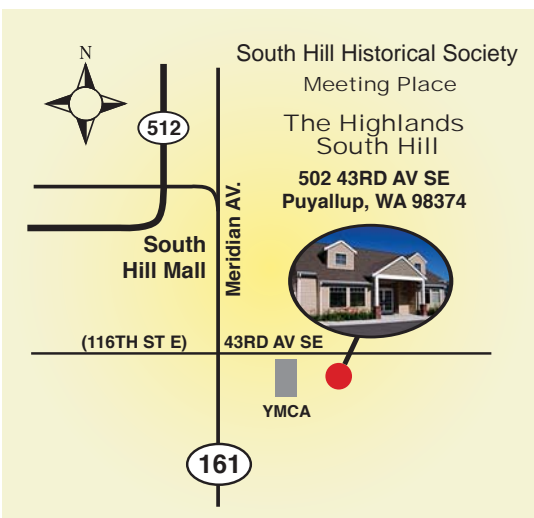
Dues Reminder

I will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date. **No need to fill out the membership form unless there is a change of some kind.**

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month, 10:45 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 Paul Hackett at (253) 845-7691.

Where to Find Us



Our Current Members

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Andy G. Anderson | Art & Lorraine Larson |
| Andy & Ruth Anderson | Gary Leicht |
| Elizabeth Anema | Terry Maves |
| Marion Armstrong | Laurienne Stewart Minnich |
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| Mary Glaser | Jade Trevere |
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| Cecil & Doris Herbert | Carl Vest |
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| Matt Holm | Ed Zeiger |
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South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

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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, 14602 106th Avenue Court E.
South Hill, WA 98374-4905**



14602 106th Avenue Court E.
South Hill, WA 98374-4905

To: