

South Hill Historical Society members explore Longmire Trail

by Jerry Bates

A bit of history

After passing over the summit at the Naches Pass, in the fall of 1853, the Longmire wagon train had to find a way down the western slope of the mountain range. Geography proved to be both an obstacle to overcome as well as a potential passage for them. The Naches, Greenwater and White river valleys cut through mountains of rock and forest

Glaser, his wife Mary and yours truly, set out on a beautiful late summer day last October for a Society field trip. Our little venture would follow the White and Greenwater Rivers up the western slope of the Cascade Range (Mountain highway 410). Our destination was to see first hand the treacherous bluff. It's probably the most written and talked

about episode of the Longmire wagon train passage. To solve the dilemma that confronted them, they decided to empty their wagons and lower them one at a time by rope down the steep decline. So far down they had to kill an ox using its hide to extend the length of the rope.

South Hill Historical Society member Don Glaser was our guide. We followed him off the main highway and into the forest. He has since the 1950's jeeped over the Naches Pass. Don kept us entertained, and wife Mary graciously brought along coffee and cookies. Both were excellent hosts.

Don needed no maps to take us up to the trailhead that leads to the foot of the treacherous ridge.

We walked up towards the foot of the ridge and decided, because of the trail's steady incline, taking our cars around to the top made more sense. Unfortunately, this road was blocked due to construction. The day was getting late, so we decided to head back down to lower altitudes. Maybe a more serious attempt next summer?

Our trip back home was the basic path followed by the Longmire Party along the Greenwater and White Rivers in 1853. The route today is smooth asphalt; we experienced nothing like the obstacles encountered by the Longmire wagon train, battling densely forested river valleys and frequent river crossings. We can, today, drive this distance in minutes; it took our slow moving pioneers 7 days crisscrossing the Greenwater and White rivers 22 times.

Highway 410 brought us down from the high country. The highway follows the White River down



South Hill Historical Society explorers, left to right: Carolyn Nelson, Don Glaser, Mary Glaser, Jerry Bates, Paul Hackett & Ben Peters

making traveling through the Cascade Range possible, but far from easy. The rivers offered no road or clear path but did provide a way for them to proceed. The journey had been made on foot for hundreds of years by the local Indians following what was known as the Klickitat trail, but pulling 36 wagons and like number of ox teams through this difficult passage was another matter.

Having cleared the summit, our pioneers now had to reach the banks of the Greenwater River and the beginning of the river route down the western slope out of the highlands. One more seemingly insurmountable obstacle stood between them and the river, however. It was an almost perpendicular bluff that no wagon and team could possibly descend.

Fast Forward 150 years

Our small group from the South Hill Historical Society got a taste, ever how slight, of the Longmire ordeal at this bluff.

to Enumclaw and passes Mud Mountain Dam. Don turned our little caravan into the Park entrance. This Dam is a fascinating place to visit. Standing at the observation platform one gets a bird's eye view of the Dam and the White River snaking into it. The Dam has one purpose in life and that is to



Carolyn Nelson and Paul Hackett forge up the trail, it was steeper than it appears here!

backup the White River in a steep canyon to prevent flooding of the Auburn and Puyallup Valleys. Before the dam was built in the late 1940s, winter floods would occur putting streets and fields underwater as far as Tacoma.

Back to our pioneers

The wagon train finally left the river passage at Connells Prairie and made camp. They then traveled across South Prairie and on to the Puyallup River, at the site of the future Van Ogle farm. At this spot our bedraggled and near starving group feasted on Humpback salmon, easy to catch due to low water in the river. On they went, up present day Old Military Road, across South Hill to what would be their final campsite as a group. This last camp was on Clover Creek at the present day Brookdale Golf Course. They were now among permanent residents. The immigrants were generously given needed provisions from local farms, including an ox drawn cart, from the Hudson Bay Company Chief Factor, Dr. Tolmie, loaded with beef recently killed and dressed. From this camp-

site the men rode their horses on to Fort Steilacoom, about seven miles northwest of the Clover Creek camp. While the men were gone, Longmire's wife, plus other camp women, were invited to the table of Mrs. Christopher Mahan. A banquet awaited them, a welcome treat after months of hardship on the trail.

From this last campsite our immigrants would scatter in different directions to start new lives in, for them, a new land. Most sought places to homestead in Pierce and Thurston counties.

For a more detailed account of the Longmire crossing, see *The Longmire Party and the Crossing of South Hill*, by Carl Vest, in the September South Hill Historical Society newsletter.

South Hill Historical Society members make the news

In the three short years since our beginning, our historical society has been mentioned frequently in the *Tacoma News Tribune*. Most recently some of our members have been the subjects of articles.

In the October 28th issue, member Arthur Massie was given front-page treatment. His picture was prominently displayed holding a fragment of a Japanese balloon bomb found by his father during WWII on their property not far from Thun Field (Pierce County Airport). Nine thousand of these incendiary bombs were set adrift towards the Western United States in retaliation for the Doolittle raids; 900 are believed to have reached our mainland. This was a highly kept secret by our military until the war ended.

Also, an article in the October 2nd issue of TNT concerned member Ernie Hopp having his land used for a future park on South Hill.

Paul Hackett was "Newsmaker of the Week" in the special "You & Me" section of the Nov. 16 Sunday edition of *The News Tribune*. Kudos to our SHHS president!

South Hill Historical Society Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Home E-mail address: _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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

Answers to the South Hill History Game

by Paul Hackett

Play “Do You Know.....? Get all 10 correct and you are a pioneerophyle on South Hill.

1. *Where did a verified Japanese paper balloon bomb land on South Hill in 1945?*

A certified Japanese paper bomb landed on South Hill in March 1945 in Charles Massie’s orchard. Also the Parks family has recollections of a landing near 128th (formerly Collins Road) and 94th Avenue East.

2. *How deep is the south end of Bradley Lake?*

Bradley Lake, according to Ward Bradley, who created the lake, is 12 feet deep at the north end, and 30 feet deep in the south end. (Fishing is best in the south end, except when they place Troutlodge fish in the lake. At that time it is best near the caretaker’s home).

3. *Why was what is now Meridian Avenue chartered in the shape of an “L”?*

Meridian Avenue was chartered in the shape of an “L” so that Swamp Muhler, hop grower, could get “Farm-to-market” crop movement. He lived at 152nd Street and 110th Avenue East.

4. *Why did the McMillan Grange come to the Fruitland Grange to administer the 5th and 6th degree work?*

The McMillan Grange, being an older grange, could supply the 5th and 6th degree work to applicants at the Fruitland Grange.

5. *Why did the contractor sue the City of Tacoma for more money in 1912 to complete the building of the Pipeline?*

Too much hardpan was encountered by the contractor for the pipeline to Tacoma from the McMillan Reservoir. Articles in the Tacoma paper covered the extensive litigation, which the contractor won in 1912.

6. *Why did the grocer’s daughter dislike The Tennessee Waltz being played at the Willows Tavern next door?*

The grocer’s (Millers Grocery) daughter, Margaret Miller Pica, constantly heard “The Tennessee Waltz” playing nearby at the Willows Tavern.

7. *Why did promoters in the 1930’s urge buying land on Main Street (now 122nd St E) on South Hill?*

Promoters of an area at 122nd St and about 118th Av E marketed the stump land as being an excellent place to earn HUGE PILES of money growing

and marketing rabbits. The area became known as “The Rabbit Farms.” More details in an upcoming Newsletter.

8. *Why doesn’t 39th Av SE (formerly 112th St E) go straight east and west across Meridian Avenue?*

39th Avenue East does not cross Meridian Avenue. This is in the area of Borders Bookstore site now. Originally a request was made of the county commissioner to close that access for a store developer’s parcel. Dr. Charles Barth was vocally opposed to this move and an editorial supported his contention that a “Disaster was looming”.

9. *Was there ever a landing strip for planes on the west side of Meridian?*

Yes. There was a landing strip for planes on the west side of Meridian Avenue.

10. *Why did they charge \$.75 for “Gentlemen” at The Willows, a destination resort dance hall, and \$.25 for “Ladies.”?*

Women were encouraged to attend the famous “Willows Dance Hall” because there was a smaller female population. So men were \$.75 admission, and ladies, \$.25



Happy Holidays
from the Officers
of the South Hill Historical
Society

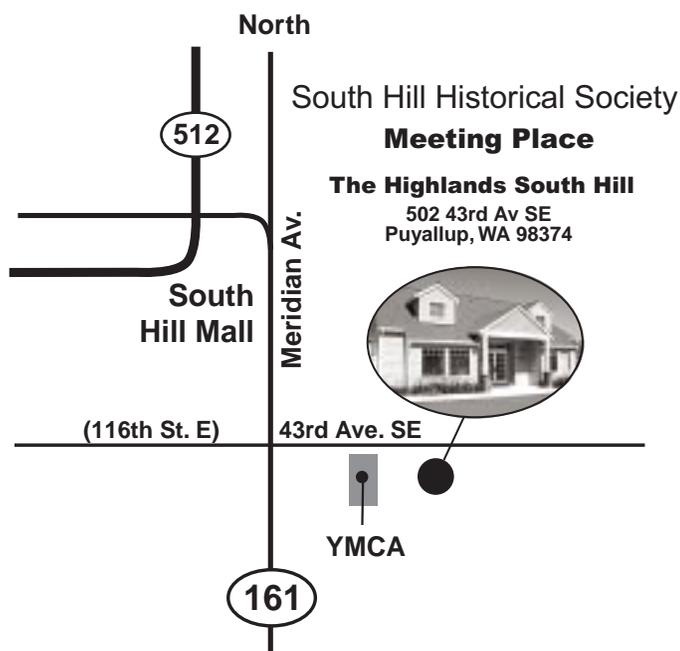
**Make a resolution for 2004
Join us at our
next meeting,
January 20 at 11:15 A.M.
at the Highlands**

*Mark your calander for the
3rd Tuesday each month for the
South Hill Historical Society*

Where to find us

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



HERITAGE CORRIDOR
11711 92nd AV E
Puyallup WA 98373

From the Treasurer: Our Current Members

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Calvin and Amy Goings
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