

Still With Us

by Jerry Bates

You pass it, maybe everyday, an important part of South Hill History, a red brick school building, part of the Firgrove Elementary School campus. That building was the old Firgrove School that opened its doors to South Hill kids in 1935. Some of those first students still live on South Hill today!

The original Firgrove School started in the early 1900s as a wooden structure east of Meridian on 136th Street (the old Patzner Road) not far from its current site. The brick building we pass on Meridian today was opened in 1935 when it replaced the original wooden schoolhouse on Patzner Road.



Today's Firgrove School. Right: as it appeared in 1930s



These folks can remember a South Hill, during the Depression era, with only three schools, Woodland, Puyallup Heights and Firgrove. Each of the three accommodated grades one through eight. The Woodland School is still at its original location, Fruitland and 112th, the old building recently demolished to make way for a new campus. The Puyallup Heights School is long gone; the Meridian Firs Apartments stand approximately where it once stood.

However, the old Firgrove School is still standing at the heart of South Hill, astride the busy congested Meridian Avenue. Meridian has been ever widening as time passes, but the little brick school still stands its ground, although altered a bit in appearance over the years.

The newer section of the school, to the north of the old building, was added in 1961.

During the hard times of the Depression, Don Glaser, a current South Hill Historical Society member and lifetime South Hill resident, attended this school the first year it opened. He went through grades 1 through 8 then on to Puyallup High School where he graduated in 1949. Don tells us that his mother attended the old wood Firgrove School in the early 1920s! Don remembers, when he attended Firgrove, there were two rooms and two teachers. One room had grades 1 through 4, the other room grades 5 through 8. Must have kept those teachers busy?

Don Glaser and Dorothy Pearson Christy, his classmate from that time, have compiled a scrapbook of class pictures taken during those early years. Their collection now consists of the classes 1939 through 1943, with some gaps yet to be filled. Don searched for, found and spoke to several former students of Firgrove during the time he

Continued on page 6

The New South Hill Community Plan

by Carl Vest

On Wednesday, April 30, 2003, at 4 p.m., John Ladenburg, Pierce County Executive, signed into law a community-based plan that, during the next two decades, will regulate growth, housing and real-estate development, building designs, and other programs on South Hill. This Plan was the culmination of a three-year work-effort undertaken jointly by a volunteer group of South Hill residents and Pierce County government.

I am proud to report that members of the South Hill Historical Society participated in the development of this Plan. And, as it was finally refined, the new law requires that in the future our Society play an important role in the preservation of historical sites on South Hill and the collection and safekeeping of important artifacts.

The South Hill Community Plan (SHCP) is composed of several elements: Land Use; Community Character and Design; Natural Environment; Economic; and, Facilities and Services. As far as the Society is concerned the focus is on that part titled the *Community Character and Design Element* which includes a section labeled *Historic Preservation*. It is in this segment where language appears requiring the involvement of the South Hill Historical Society when future developments on South Hill are considered.

In the Plan (page 73) it is stated that the intent of this historic preservation program is to *Record South Hill's history of settlement and development through restoration and preservation*. This general statement is brought more into focus by Objective 35 of the Plan that declares it is an objective of Pierce County to identify and preserve South Hill history.

Objective 35 is further divided into three guiding Principles, all intended to be the blueprint for

future actions. Principle 1 says that it is the intent of this program to *Identify and record South Hill's history and [to] centralizes [sic] the information in a public location*. Principle 2 further elaborates by stating that also the aim is to *Preserve sites of historical significance and strive to emphasize the importance of community history*. Finally, Principle 3 stresses the importance of historic preservation by stating the purpose is to *Promote the knowledge and presence of history in the community because it provides a sense of belonging and tradition for those who live in or visit the community*.

It is in the implementation of Objective 35, and its three principles, where the Society is mentioned, where it is made a part of the South Hill Community Plan, and is assigned an action role in future activities on the Hill. There are eleven specific standards listed. The following descriptions are examples:

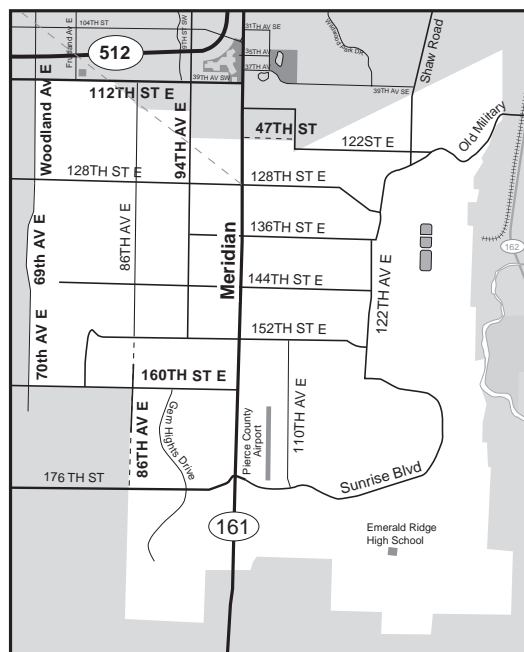
- A historic preservation program will be implemented to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archaeological resources. [Standard 35.1.1]

- Support and work with the South Hill Historical Society to record the history of the area through fundraising, identifying grant opportunities, and attending activities sponsored by the Society. [Standard 35.1.2]

- The Historical Society coordinates historic documentation activities but should be able to look to the Land Use Advisory commission and County for assistance and support. [Standard 35.1.2]

- Research and acquire a possible site for the Historical Society to locate information and teach about the history of South Hill. [Standard 35.1.3]

South Hill Community Plan



The area covered in the South Hill Community Plan

Continued on page 6

Special Donations to our Society

The South Hill Historical Society has been the recipient of several remarkable items this spring. At our May 20th meeting a special framed piece of embroidery was donated by Mr. W. Lynn Williams and Mr. Robert H. Williams. It was given to their mother, Nellie Williams, from Mabel Litton who designed and made the embroidery. The names of the 51 women in the Home Crafters Club are embroidered around the outer border. This Club met on South Hill in the 1930s. In the center is the poem:

**FRIENDSHIP IS
AN ENDLESS CHAIN
THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM
FOR ONE MORE NAME**



Embroidery done by the Home Crafters Club on South Hill in the 1930s

A second presentation was a notebook prepared by Don Glaser and Dorothy Christy. It shows photos of classes and information about Firgrove School from 1939-1943. Mr. Glaser stated that they plan to continue working on this project. This "new" brick Firgrove School was dedicated on September 26, 1935.

Arthur Massie shared with us an old map of Europe which was used in the Puyallup Heights School on 103rd and Meridian. It is in good condition, but it probably dates back to World War I. Mr. Massie also brought a photo of a bear on South Hill in 1937. This picture prompted recollections of bear stories by Bernice Rinehart and Maudine Rushton.

Bernice Fisher Rinehart recently gave our society a scrapbook with photos and mementos from Woodland School during the 1920's and 1930's.

On April 15 we had our annual "Story-Telling Time" at the Highlands. At that meeting Cindy Bruno from Cascade Feed Co. (on 104th St.) presented two special gifts to our group: a cloth map of Greater Tacoma plus the South Hill area (probably from the 1920's) and a plat book with plats dating from 1916 to 1959. The properties were located in the area from the Fairgrounds up to 128th St. (formerly Collins Road). These items were found between the walls of the house which the Brunos purchased on 102nd and Fruitland Ave.

We are grateful for these donations which contribute greatly to our effort to preserve the history of life on South Hill in the early days.

Puyallup Fair Committee forming

During the Puyallup Fair September 5-21, 2003, the Western Washington Fair Museum will feature Pierce County history. Thirty Pierce County historical associations will participate. While we are young and not steady on our feet, some of our enthusiastic members are forming a committee to take part in this event. A display will be required, plus volunteers to man the museum displays during fair hours on our assigned day. If you're interested contact Paul Hackett 845-7691.

South Hill Historical Society Officers

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

From the Treasurer:

Are we on a roll or what? We now have 28 members and growing. It is very gratifying the interest and involvement that we have in **our** South Hill Historical Society.

Ben Peters

Members include:

John and Ruth Anderson

Jim and Elizabeth Anema

Jerry Bates

Ward F. Bradley

Mildred A. Dobbs

Don and Mary Glaser

William (Bill) Goelzer

Calvin and Amy Goings

Paul Hackett

Cecil and Doris Herbert

Charles and Maybelle Hoenhaus

Art S. and Marvella Massie

Laurienne Stewart Minnich

John A. Mosolf

Carolyn Nelson

Dorothy Nelson

Mark and Dorothy Norris

Ben Peters

Ella M. Reese

Bill Riley

Bernice Fisher Rinehart

David and Bonnie Starkel

Carl Vest

Richard and Joan Vosler

Vivian Wepfer

Pam and Don Williams

Kevin Wimsett

Marilyn Larson Winterton

Donors & Donations

\$170 - \$200

Ward Bradley, Ben Peters, Friends of the South Hill Library

\$100

Columbia Bank, Frontier Bank, Bill Riley

\$70 - \$90

Carl Vest, Don Glaser

\$50

Paul Hackett

\$1 - \$20

Bev Knoll, Olive McDonough, Elva Smith, Eunice Barth Gilliam, Margaret Miller Picha, Leona Starkel, John Thun, Maudine Swalander Rushton, Roger Goelzer, Robert Crabb, Chuck Hoenhaus, John Mosolf, Kurt Wassman, Roy McDaniels, Stella Jorgenson, Vivian Wepfer, Al Larsen, Lloyd Dodd, Millie Dobbs, Viva (Delano) Ryan, Peter Parks, Bonnie Nicolet Starkel.

Highlands South Hill - Meeting Room
Jerry Bates - Society Logo
Carolyn Nelson - Stamps, Cakes

South Hill Artifacts and Memorabilia

Our collection is small but growing. If you have any items you would be willing to donate, please let us know!

Current Collection

Two-piece buck saw
Wooden butter-making bowl
A brick from the old Woodland School
Railroad spikes from Vosler (Parks) home.
Map rendering of historical sites and markers
Fire District No. 9 map
Old cowbell
Original slat from wooden water pipe
1930s Home Crafters Club Embroidery
Firgrove School Scrapbook (classes 1939 to 1943)
Woodland School Scrapbook
1920s cloth map of greater Tacoma & South Hill
Plat book 1916 to 1959

Getting here in 1853

September 16th Meeting



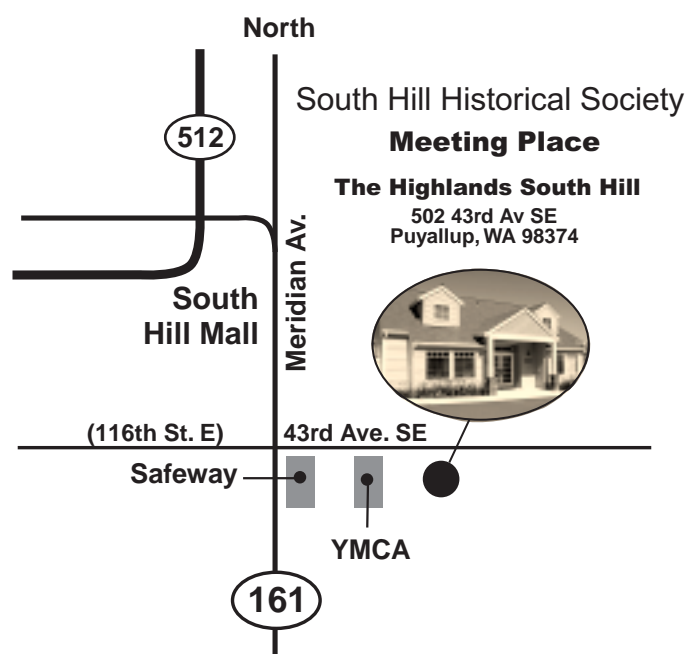
Our first meeting after summer break will focus on the 150th anniversary of the Longmire-Byles party crossing of the Naches Pass Trail in 1853. We celebrate this northern branch of the Oregon Trail as the foundation of our South Hill history. Parts of the trail are still used and winding through our community today, in the form of the Old Military Road.

**Tuesday, September 16th
11:15 AM
at the
Highlands 502 43rd Ave SE.**

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 Membership Form

Name		
Address	Phone	
City	State	Zip

Home E-mail address:

Signature _____ Date _____

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

Annual Dues: Society membership \$25.00

Note: Please do not send cash.

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

attended. When he contacted one of the old students he picked their brains and urged them to search their memories, or others, who might have attended in those early years and would share Firgrove School class pictures or were able to identify some of the young faces in those old photographs. Dorothy did a very professional job of making a “scrapbook” to contain copies of these old class photos.

Don and Dorothy are now looking for someone to carry on their effort, continuing the record of class photographs through the 1940s and 1950s. If you know anyone who could contribute to Don and Dorothy’s scrapbook or would be willing to carry the project forward in time, let us at the Historical Society know.



11711 92nd AV E
Puyallup WA 98373

- Work with the South Hill Historical Society to identify and inventory historic resources. [Standard 35.2.1]
- Actively pursue the opportunity to link the South Hill Heritage Corridor with the Naches Trail from Walla Walla to Steilacoom. [Standard 35.2.3]
- Work with the local school districts to integrate South Hill history into the curriculum. [Standard 35.3.1]
- Disseminate South Hill historical information through media interviews, newspaper articles, store fliers, and/or a centrally located kiosk or landmarks. [Standard 35.3.2]

The law resulting from the South Hill Community Plan was effective on June 16, 2003. It creates a significant opportunity for the Society to work with the County and other organizations and individuals that will be developing properties and businesses in the area covered by the Plan. It will be a challenge for the Society to fulfil its role. However we all look forward to the obligation and being a part of this formidable task.

To: