

A Brief History of South Hill

The fast-growing region of South Hill has a rich history, dating back to the first settlements on Puget Sound. An early and still visible component, built in the 1840s, was a military road. And, on October 8, 1853, the famous Longmire-Biles wagon train crossed South Hill on that military road, having traveled through the Cascade Mountains on the ancient, Native American, Naches Pass Trail.

By the 1870s many Euro-Americans were living on the Hill, grouped mostly along the Military Road. But other families were arriving, spreading south, including hop farmer Carl F. Mueller. A common problem of the period was getting crops to market, which led Mueller and 90 other residents to petition Pierce County to build a north-south road. The request was granted and it was named Ball-Wood Road, now known as Meridian Avenue. Meridian is believed to be the first planned road on South Hill.

One of the earliest economic endeavors was logging. The first settlers had found South Hill covered with old growth trees. But by the early 1900s logging operations using oxen, horses, skids, and later railroad spurs, had transformed much of the landscape into a barren wasteland covered with stumps. However, by 1910 the low-priced land had attracted an estimated 300 dairymen and vegetable farmers, as well as chicken and rabbit ranchers.

Early transportation methods consisted primarily of ox-drawn wagons that were gradually replaced by automobiles. By 1909 public transportation was available via the Tacoma-Puyallup Interurban Line, a rail system. This was followed in 1935 by The Woodland Bus Company routes. Aviation was started on a gravel airstrip in the 1930s by John Thun; that facility is now known as Pierce County Airport.

During WWII (1945) a Japanese balloon bomb apparently landed on South Hill. Fragments from the bomb were recovered at various locations.

Early business ventures were concentrated around Kupfer's Corner (a.k.a. Willows Corner) now the intersection of Meridian Avenue and 112th Street (formerly historic Airport Way). This location featured a gas station, a grocery, a tavern, and in the 1930s the Willows Dance Hall (admission for men, 75 cents, for women 25 cents).

Explosive growth started with the completion of Highway 512 in 1972. Housing developments began to sprout up, bringing in as many as 1,000 homes in one plat. Businesses formed along Meridian Avenue.

During the last 30 years the people on South Hill have formed associations, clubs and councils in an effort to channel and control the growth, with some success. Pierce County has been very active in planning for new roads, parks and recreational projects.

Written by Carl Vest and officers of the South Hill Historical Society, October 15, 2005.

1840-50s



Old Military Road

Longmire-Biles wagon train

1870s



Hop farming

Ball-Wood Road (Meridian)

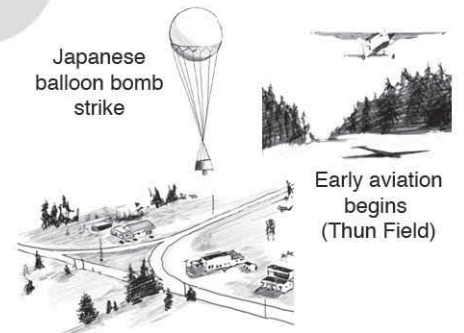
1900



Old growth Douglas Fir lumbering

Old Line trolley Fern Hill to Puyallup via South Hill

1930-40s

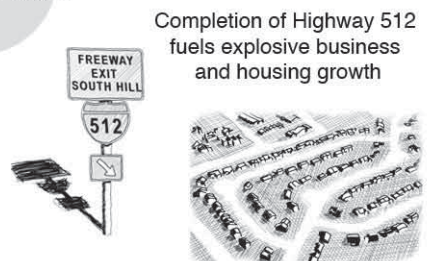


Japanese balloon bomb strike

Early aviation begins (Thun Field)

Business ventures start at Kupfer's Corner (Willows Corner)

1970s



Completion of Highway 512 fuels explosive business and housing growth

Memories of South Hill during World War II

by member Barbara Huff Ringo

I enjoyed reading Helen Heil Rohlman's memories in the September South Hill Historical Society newsletter. I remember the Heil girls, as they and their mom picked berries at my brother-in-law's berry farm in Puyallup, as did I. We, too, had farm animals and a big garden to feed our large family (seven kids, Mom and Pop and Grandma Whitford) at the reservoir.

I have some memories to relate. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor many things changed. We had to "black out" the windows on the house for one thing.

Once a tank from Fort Lewis got "lost" somehow and ended up at the crossroads of Reservoir Road and Military Road. The "scars" where it turned around were there for years. We had heard it coming up the road and wondered what it could be. The torn-up turf and tread marks gave us the answers!

It was quite a thrill to see P-38 airplanes flying above the reservoir when the pilots were getting their flight time. One actually dived toward the reservoir, and I could see the pilot quite clearly.

There were Red Cross first aid classes at Firgrove School where we learned how to bandage wounds and make slings, etc.

Air raid drills were held as well. Everyone had an emergency route to their homes from school, staying clear of main roads by going through woods and brush to get there.

I belonged to 4-H Club and one year received the Kiwanis trophy for the best victory garden in Pierce County. My mother, Winnifred Huff, was leader then. Later, Florence Glaser, (Don's mother) took over as leader, and I remember going to Achievement Day rallies at Fruitland Grange Hall. Also, going to Pullman to Washington State College to 4-H Club camp where members and leaders from all over Washington attended. That year my brother Leslie also attended, as did Wayne Glaser and Vernon Rockstad. There was also 4-H Club camp at Benlow Lake Resort in the summer.

There were lots of social events at Firgrove School-Carnivals, Christmas programs, box socials (sometimes called basket socials) The box social was where the women and girls would make a picnic lunch and pack it into a decorated box to be auctioned off to the men and boys and then shared with the successful bidder. This raised money for the school and the PTA. The Christmas programs consisted of a play and entertainment followed at the end by "Santa" handing out bags of candy, nuts and even an orange!

There weren't many accidents at school, but I remember Billy Stover getting hit by a car or truck in front of the school and getting a broken leg. He lived across from the school and went home for lunch.

Then when I was in 7th grade, Marlene Rockstad ran behind a batter during a noon recess ball game and was hit by the bat and knocked unconscious, I ran to tell Miss Plank and Mrs. Miller (my cousin) and since there was no ambulance handy or 911 to call, we loaded her into Mrs. Miller's car for a trip to Puyallup Clinic to have her checked. The only lasting result was a broken front tooth.

Mr. Fred Predmore (Sr.) had a team of horses that my folks hired to come and plow, harrow and later cut and rake the hay for our cows. I always tried to get a ride on the wagon when the hay was picked up to put in our barn, so I could "drive" the horses.

In the late 40's we had some very cold winters, and once Don Glaser gave my brother Les and I and his brother a ride in his Model "T" on the ice on Massey's pond, that had frozen over. Fun!

In the 30's and early 40's the highway (Meridian) was paved, on both sides, as far as Mitchell-Gould road and from there on only one lane was paved, at least as far as Graham. The cars were few in those days and people would drive on the paved side until another car was seen coming towards them and then get over on the unpaved side. I don't know what year the second lane was paved, perhaps someone else knows.

We shopped for groceries at Willows Corner in Miller's store there. Across the road was Annis' Standard Oil gas station where we also traded. The other business was a tavern run by George Mabbitt (not sure of spelling)

Well, that's a few memories for the moment. There are many more of course but they're sort of trivial!

Hope this has been of interest.

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

South Hill Historical Society Officers

President, Paul Hackett
Vice-President, Don Glaser
Secretary, Joan Vosler
Research Coordinator, Carl Vest
Treasurer, Ben Peters
Newsletter Editor, Jerry Bates

Exploring the old Naches Pass

wagon trail - *Round Two* by Jerry Bates

We are lucky to have SHHS Vice President Don Glaser and his wife Mary as members. Don and Mary have belonged to local Jeep clubs since the 1950s. They bought their first Jeep in 1956 and have never been without one since. Don is our expert regarding the back roads and logging trails in the Naches Pass area of the Cascades. Both Don and Mary are very familiar with the old Longmire-Biles wagon trail. This trail is still with us, linking the eastern and western slopes of the Cascade Range between the Yakima area and Pierce County.

Last August we had our second opportunity to explore the old pioneer route. Our first attempt, October 2004, we could go no farther than the Greenwater bluff part of the old trail, due to road construction.

Our second attempt started from where we left off last year. We traveled up miles of meandering logging roads. From these relatively well maintained gravel roads we ventured on and off parts of the old wagon trail as far as Government Meadows, not far from the Naches Pass. From this point on, the trail became too rough to risk our trusty Jeep, our only means back to civilization.

The day's outing was more of an adventure than I expected. I along with others of our party were amazed at Don's trail climbing and descending skills with his Jeep Cherokee, which he recently equipped with a suspension lift kit. Personally, I felt more secure walking the rough parts of the trail and watching Don do his Jeep maneuvers, rather than riding along. We all got a first-hand sense of the rough intimidating terrain the Longmire-Biles party faced pushing west. However, our forebears faced a lot more rough going than we endured, they with ox drawn wagons following an ancient Indian foot trail and sometimes no trail, huge virgin trees blocking out sunlight and sometimes these monsters were lying across their path, impossible to move. They slowly made progress during the month of October in 1853, with winter coming on in the mountains. The worst part of their journey was still ahead of them at the treacherous descent to the Greenwater River.

I'm sure our hearty pioneers did not see their crossing as recreation. However, for us, it was a fun day.

Don is hinting about another trip next summer?



Above, high in the Cascades, Mary Glaser, Sheila & Roy Rinker & Don Glaser. Notice the logging road seen above versus the old pioneer trail on the right.



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

From The Treasurer

by Ben Peters

A warm welcome to our newest members:

Evelyn Swalander Hess & Jim Ruble

Members due for RENEWAL:

April (Past Due)

Dorothy Gould

July (Past Due)

Chuck & Maybelle

Hoenhaus

Don & Helen Otto

John & Ruth Anderson

August (Past Due)

Richard & John Vosler

Ward Bradley

September (Past Due)

Karey Hanks

October (Past Due)

Ernest & Irene Hopp

Ron & Lois Pearson

Bernice Rinehart

November (Past Due)

Stanley & Ila Goter

Dianna & Fred Fritz

William & Doris Scott

January

James Dixon

Lloyd Freudenstein

Calvin & Amy Goings

Art Larson

Laurienne Minnich

Linda Forsberg

February

Allen Zulauf

March

Marilyn Burnett

Ralph & Yvonne Thorpe

Our Current Members

Andy G. Anderson

John & Ruth Anderson

Jim & Elizabeth Anema

Bob Ballou

Jerry Bates

Ward F. Bradley

Marilyn Burnett

James H. Dixon

Mildred A. Dobbs

Linda Forsberg

Arthur & Luverne Foxford

Lloyd Freudenstein

Dianna & Fred Fritz

Don and Mary Glaser

William (Bill) Goelzer

Hazel Whitford Miller Goheen

Calvin & Amy Goings

Stanley & Ila Goter

Dorothy Gould

Paul Hackett

Karey Goelzer Hanks

James Hawley

Cecil & Doris Herbert

Evelyn Swalander Hess

Charles & Maybelle Hoenhaus

Ernest & Irene Hopp

Dale Huff

Art Larson

Art S. & Marvella Massie

Olive McDonough

Laurienne Stewart Minnich

John A. Mosolf

Carolyn Nelson

Dorothy Nelson

Juanita Nordin

Mark & Dorothy Norris

Christopher O'Kelly

Don & Helen Otto

Ron & Lois Pearson

Wes & Suzy Perkinson

Ben Peters

Ella M. Reese

Bill Riley

Bernice Fisher Rinehart

Barbara Huff Ringo

Roy and Sheila Rinker

Vern Rockstad

Helen Rohlman

Earl Root

Jim Ruble

Frank Ryser

Stan & Margery Salmon

William & Doris Scott

Clara K. Singer (Wallace)

Bonnie Nicolet Starkel

Lori Stock

Bill Stover

Marge (Crosson) Swain

Ralph & Yvonne Thorpe

Margo L & Joe Tucci

Carl Vest

Neil & Celia Vincent

Richard & Joan Vosler

Vivian Wepfer

W. Lynn Williams

Kevin Wimsett

Marilyn Larson Winterton

Lenore Nicolet Winton

Allen & Ellen Zulauf

Reminder from the Treasurer

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.



We hope your holiday season has been a pleasant one. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the officers of the South Hill Historical Society.

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**.



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Puyallup WA 98373

To: