



# History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society  
South Hill, Pierce County, Washington

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## Willows Corner...say what?

by Carl Vest, Introduction by Jerry Bates

Mention "Willows Corner" to many South Hill residents today and you might get blank stares. You will probably have to add— by South Hill Mall, 139th AV. S.W., where it makes the Y onto Meridian, Chick-fil-A, T.J. Maxx, etc. Once common names

for places on the Hill have changed or no longer exist, now only heard as old-timers talk. In 2010 our Research Coordinator Carl Vest wrote about this subject and Willows Corner for his monthly column in the "Puyallup Herald."



Willows Corner today; the insert is the same spot in 1940, then known as Kupfer's Corner later to become Willows Corner.

GENERALLY, in most social interactions when asked, "Where do you live?," we reply, "South Hill." Most of us consider South Hill our community — our neighborhood. But such declarations

are of recent origin, relatively speaking. In earlier periods Hill locations were identified by naming distinct communities or districts, each called by a specific title. In the mid twentieth century, for

example, there were neighborhoods called the Willows, Firgrove, Puyallup Heights, Woodland, the Rabbit Farms, and others. None were legal entities. But during those times when asked where they lived people would use the vicinity name with South Hill as a secondary descriptor.

One neighborhood that grew to commercial importance was the Willows. It has been described as being the first shopping center on South Hill. It was that area situated around the intersection of present day 112th Street (39th Ave. in the Puyallup system) and Meridian Avenue. In prior times 112th Street was also known as Airport Road (and as Airport Way). While the locale is now generally referred to as the South Hill Mall, there are still some remaining vestiges of the Willows label. There are, for example, a number of business names that have Willows incorporated into their identifiers.

The name Willows can be credited to the work of a man named Al Delano. In 1939 he bought most of the land around the intersection. He increased his holdings in 1944 to include acreage across Meridian Avenue. At that time there were only a few homes and businesses close by. The land did, however, support a large number of willow trees. So Mr. Delano named the intersection "The Willows" and promoted the name at every opportunity. Previously, it had been known as Kupfer's Corner, after a family that had a home nearby.

At the time of Mr. Delano's purchase there was a tavern, a grocery store, and an automobile service station on the property. During the next two decades he developed a rather large commercial center. By 1957, for example, the businesses included a barbershop, a food store, a tavern, a cafe, a lumber company, and a trailer court. During this period The Willows was in fact considered the center of expansion efforts into central and east Pierce County. It was said to be the transportation hub for Hill people working in and about Tacoma and for those coming through the area to visit such places as Mt. Rainier. This was a continuation of the pattern set by World War II employment when the local people supported the war effort at jobs primarily on the tide flats.

Businesses around the road intersection have continued to expand to this day. The South Hill Mall, the Willows Shopping Center where Borders

Books (currently T.J. Maxx store) is located, and the commercial strips in both directions from the intersection, are all part of the original Willows site. Unfortunately, the name has almost disappeared. Other than a few signs adopted by local businesses there are no markers to show that there once was a vibrant neighborhood called Willows.

## 2019 Scholarship Winners

This year our scholarship awards go to two very deserving young people Lanna Wertenberger of Emerald Ridge High School and Jale' Williams of Rogers High School. Every spring, our Treasurer, Ben Peters, represents the South Hill Historical Society during scholarship ceremonies held at South Hill's Rogers and Emerald Ridge High Schools. Our Scholarship Committee awards a \$500 scholarship for two college-bound seniors from many applications submitted. The grant comes from a fund set up by a generous South Hill Historical Society member who prefers to remain anonymous.

**Lanna Wertenberger**, loves ancient history and is eager to pursue a career involving museum work, her goal to be a manager or department curator. She's excited to start classes at Gordon College located in very historic place, Boston. The school is connected with many museums in the Boston area with possible job opportunities after graduation. Lanna is also a talented piano player with many awards to her credit. She's an officer in the Aviation Club, member of the varsity golf team, a Rotary student of the month and has started on her national parks passport to visit at least one park in every state.

**Jale' Williams**, is focusing her sights on a career in criminal justice. After obtaining her Associates Degree at Pierce College she will decide between four different universities for a Bachelor's degree in Forensic Lab and Field. She's the only one in her family to go to college. She's earned varsity letters in band, track and field, also volunteering in her community helping feed homeless people while helping them with their clothing needs. She gets high acclaim from faculty such as, "contentious, organized and responsible... always challenging herself taking Advanced Placement classes in History, English, Government and Sta-

tistics.”

We wish them both successes as they move forward in their lives — both are off to good start!

### Have something for the newsletter?

*We accept anything relating to South Hill history. For example: family history, a current event, an announcement, old photographs. We're glad to assist with writing or editing.*

Go to our website [southhillhistory.com](http://southhillhistory.com) click on "Contact"

## Where to Find Us



 Find us on Facebook  
[facebook.com/groups/SouthHillHistoricalSociety](https://facebook.com/groups/SouthHillHistoricalSociety)

### In Memoriam

The South Hill Historical Society regrets the passings of

**Vern Cox**

**Art Larson**

**Laurienne Minnich**

# 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](mailto:poppa-ben2002@yahoo.com), South Hill Historical Society, Box 73582, 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, 11:00 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, go to our website [southhillhistory.com](http://southhillhistory.com).

## South Hill Historical Society Board of Directors

*President, Bob Ballou*

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[southhillhistory.com](http://southhillhistory.com)

# South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name		
Address	Phone	
City	State	Zip
E-mail Address		
Signature _____ Date _____ Renewal, check here <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Annual Dues: Society membership \$25.00</b> <i>Note: Please do not send cash.</i>		Make check or M.O. payable to South Hill Historical Society and mail with this application to: <b>South Hill Historical Society, Box 73582, South Hill, WA 98374</b>



Box 73582  
South Hill, WA 98374

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To: