The Alderton Connection

by Jerry Bates

Not much is left of Alderton. I've noticed it doesn't even show up on some current area maps. I assume our readers know where Alderton is, if not, its the little cluster of buildings a mile north of the intersection of Old Military Road and State Route 162 (Valley Ave.) as you head towards Sumner.

Looking Back

Let's go back a hundred and twenty years, or so. Alderton wasn't always so obscure. For early residents of the hill, say prior to 1888, Alderton was the closest center of activity, where you went for supplies, mail, church and general contact with the world beyond lonely farm and tall trees.

Strange as it seems to us nowadays, there was

on the hill six months before discovering where Puyallup was. At that time travel was oriented east and west across the hill following the Military Road not north and south following Meridian Ave. E as today. For many early hill families a trip to "town" would mean following the Military Road down the hill to Alderton, not down the hill to Puyallup. Back then Alderton was approaching its heyday, a thriving new community, larger than Sumner to its north, sitting astride the Military Road and a rail line running north and south.

The lure of Alderton for these hill families rapidly diminished after a road up the hill from Puyallup was completed in 1888. But one significant South Hill connection to Alderton remained

The Alderton store 1913, seen here with the much-remodeled store of today. Just north of the store (not seen in these views) is the old Alderton School and gymnasium built in 1915, still standing.

a time when living on the hill didn't mean you belonged to Puyallup. There was no road to Puyallup until 1888 — years after many families had already occupied the hill. The story is often told of the early settler Alois Kupfer, living

for many years after that, and is still vivid in the memories of many local old-timers. A landmark business during the early commercial era of Willows Corner was the Howard Annis Chevron Station; the owner's grandfather, Orson Annis, was the "Ezra Meeker" of Alderton.

A town is born

During the early days, the site of Alderton was the proverbial fork in the road. After descending into the Puyallup River valley following the Naches Pass route across the Cascades and arriving at the river, the road went off in two directions. One way was to Seattle the other crossed the river at the Van Ogle's farm, then traveled the remaining width of the valley floor and wound its way up the hill and on to Steilacoom.

Orson Annis and his family were among the first to homestead in the valley on the west side of the Puyallup River, at today's site of Alderton, in 1869. In 1876 the Northern Pacific Railroad completed a spur from the Wilkeson coal mines

The Howard Annis Chevron Station, a landmark of Willows Corner for many years. Today the Payless Shoe store occupies this site.

and sandstone quarry to Puyallup. A train passed Alderton every ten minutes. There were many stops for wood along the route to feed the wood-burning locomotives; one of these was just west of the Annis homestead. Annis saw the potential for a future town. He and a neighbor, Mr. Oliver, gave the wood stop the official name of "Alderton," inspired by the heavy stand of alder trees in the area. Annis and his sons cleared the land, planted fruit trees, built a sawmill, a store and hotel. Annis later became the first Postmaster and ticket agent, thus earning him the title by people of the valley "Father of Alderton."
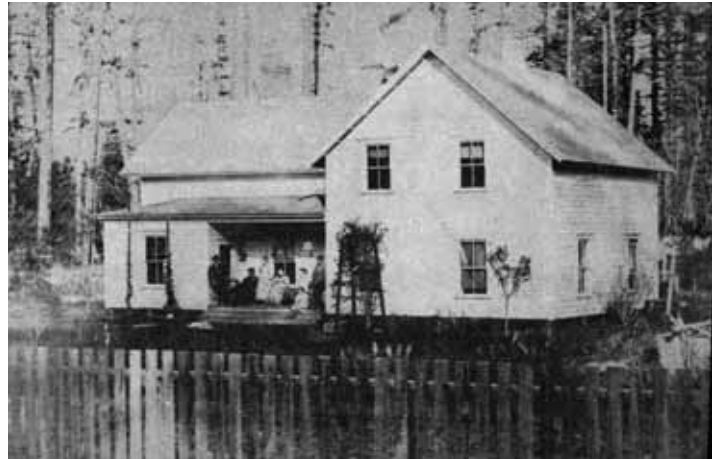
Annis legacy continues on South Hill

In 1936, Howard Annis, grandson of the early Alderton founder, took over a small service station at the Willows Corner (39th Ave. SW &

Meridian E.). He and his wife, former Ada Kilian, ran the business themselves. As time went by the business grew and he employed two men full time, plus remodeled and expanded the station.

Howard had space leased to Henry (Hank) Alflen, who was the service station mechanic. Hank later moved his repair business to a new location and named it Hilltop Service, which still operates today at its original location just as Meridian E. crests the Hill, across from Meridian Firs Apartments.

This is the Orson Annis (Father of Alderton) farmhouse built in the late 1880s. It stood, until about five years ago, directly across from the current Alderton Grocery/Food mart. Orson Annis like many of his peers at the time became affluent thanks to hop growing. Economic hard times of the late 1890s, plus a hop-killing aphid and the cost of the poison to kill it, put most local growers out of business. For Orson it meant the house being sold to M.F. Hatch and his store to Andrew Perfield. The Hatch's son, Miles Hatch, went on to make the house and acreage the center of valley daffodil, tulip and hyacinths activity. The flower-growing farm then known as the "Hatch Ranch" had such a beautiful setting with stately trees and a backdrop of intensely colored fields, it became a large tourist attraction. The ranch was recognized nationally when it earned a two-page color spread in the 1961 Saturday Evening Post magazine.

Orson Annis, probably never dreamed the future would see his growing town no longer on maps and the dark old growth forest on the hill behind him being covered with thousands of homes and a hectic commercial corridor.

If any of our members have any info on Howard Annis and the old service station, stories, memories, pictures, please let me know so we can fill out this brief history. Jerry Bates jerrybates@mac.com or 253-848-6558.

Thun Field 65 Years
Landmark of Historical South Hill

by Jerry Bates

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEBBIE BURTNETT

Thun Field's 65th Year Anniversary

Thun Field is one of the few visual links we have to South Hill's past while driving along Meridian Ave. E. Not many places having any historical significance to old South Hill remain on Meridian. Hidden away halfway down the hill, we do have what's left of an old stone fruit cellar where the Mosolf farm once was, the old Windmill Dance Hall stands neglected, surrounded by the South Hill RV Sales, and the old Firgrove School is still with us (for the time being). Slim pickings compared to historical sites available in Puyallup and Tacoma.

With this in mind, Thun Field takes on special significance for the South Hill Historical Society. It's been synonymous with South Hill for 65 years.

The 65th year anniversary event took place on a beautiful day last September 18th. A memorial plaque dedication ceremony took place, with speakers representing Pierce County and Bruce Thun, representing the Thun family. The old Thun home still stands and is used as the current airport office. Inside were refreshments with a fascinating display of old photos and signs of past air shows and other memorable airport events. Outside stood the vintage DC-3 passenger plane, restored by Eric Thun. The old airliner was a center of attention and open for boarding. Some vintage automobiles were also on display. The plaque, recently installed, commemorating the airport founder John Thun Sr. was the focus of the September event.

Before his passing in 2006, John Thun Sr. attended South Hill Historical society meetings and volunteered to help man our first South Hill Historical Society display at Puyallup Fair. Our archives contain Paul Hackett's taped interview with John Sr. and his son Bruce Thun, who currently carries on the family presence at the airport as operations supervisor.

John Thun Sr. with Olive McDonough host the South Hill Historical Society display during the 2003 Puyallup Fair

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The Airports of South Hill

By Carl Vest

It is well known that there is a very active airport located on South Hill. Anyone who has lived on the Hill for more than a few days has witnessed the vast amount of air traffic that it regularly produces. It is owned and operated by Pierce County and is officially known as the Pierce County Airport. Unofficially it's called Thun Field, and is often cited by that name in written publications – both private and governmental.

Why is it called Thun Field? Because the airport, where it is now located, was developed by a local man, John Thun, during the 1950s and 1960s.   But he did not originate this landing field nor was it the first aviation facility on South Hill.

James Sagmiller created the first airport on South Hill in the late 1930s. Before moving to the area he had operated an aviation business in his home state of North Dakota where he had been engaged in crop dusting and related aviation-agriculture activities. His intent was to move that enterprise to the farming areas of the Puyallup Valley. The airfield he built was located at the inter-section of present-day Meridian Avenue East and 168th Street. The new Wal Mart store and parking lot now occupy the site of that airstrip. While never prominent, this facility was listed in flying directories until the 1960s under the name "S&S Airport."

In late 1944 a new airport was started, at a location directly across the road from the S&S Airport location -- on the East side of Meridian. A group of Puyallup businessmen acquired the site and formed a company, not to support agricul-ture but rather to offer a place to provide aviation training for returning war veterans. The attempt did not go well. There were still restrictions on private aircraft usage because of the war effort and moreover the airstrip was never developed to acceptable standards. Eventually, it was essentially abandoned.
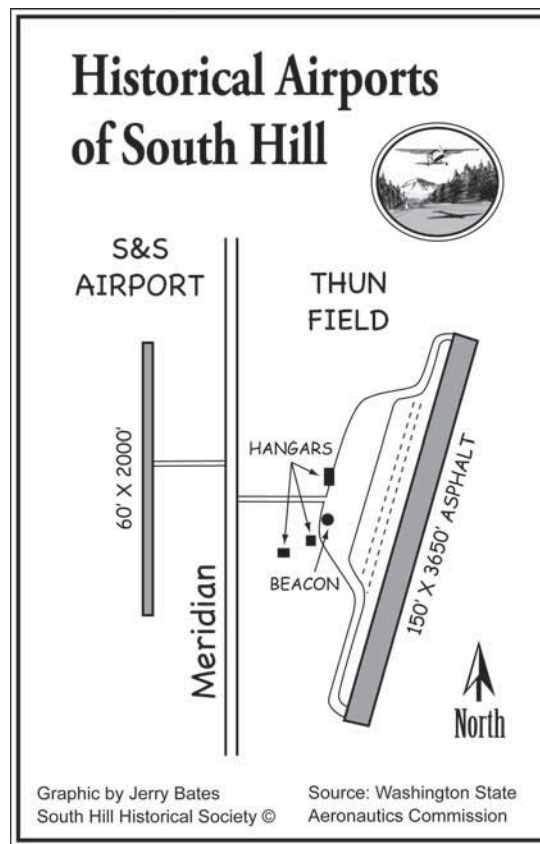
In 1949 John Thun bought the discarded airport acreage. He was an aviation enthusiast but not a pilot. He moved his family to the site and set about creating an acceptable airstrip. In this endeavor he was successful and over the next 20 years he brought into being a first class airport with modern facilities. A large number of local flyers were using it for recreational purposes, there was some limited commercial activity, and on occasion the military landed aircraft when Mc-Chord AFB was fogged in or over crowded.

Historical Airports of South Hill

S&S AIRPORT

THUN FIELD

60' X 2000'

HANGARS

Meridian

150' X 3650' ASPHALT

BEACON

North

Graphic by Jerry Bates
South Hill Historical Society ©

Source: Washington State Aeronautics Commission

Thun sold the airport in 1967.   A group of Puyallup businessmen, investors rather than airport operators, took control for a short period. They subsequently sold the business to an individual, again an investor. It remained in his hands until the County bought the property in late 1979. Thus, Pierce County has owned the present landing field for some 28 years. The County paid just over $1 million for the installation, funded primarily (89 percent) by grants from the Federal Aviation Administration and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

From the Editor: *This story may look familiar, it's one of many Carl Vest has written for the Puyallup Herald. For those who may not receive the local paper and to enhance our newsletter, I will include articles Carl has published in future issues.*

In spite of Challenges, the 2009 South Hill Historical Society Has Another Successful Showing at The Fair

by Jerry Bates

Debbie Burtnett, this year's SHHS Puyallup Fair booth coordinator, seen here while pulling duty at our large and well positioned display in the Education Pavilion at the fair for 2009.

Of special note, Debbie did some outside community support work, resulting in the Abby Road Land Development Group donating (expensive) up-to-date aerial maps of South Hill, replacing our outdated versions. These large aerial views (see photo) are always a very popular attraction for our booth. So, a lot of thanks to Abby Road, and of course, a special thanks to new member Debbie Burtnett for organizing a very successful event for the Society.

It's hard to believe we're heading for eight years hosting a South Hill Historical Society booth at the fair. This is one of our most successful community activities, however it doesn't always come without challenges. This year's event had a sad handicap with the passing of Bill Goelzer our fair booth organizer extraordinaire. With our display effort for 2009 in serious doubt—needing a volunteer to fill some pretty big shoes—we got lucky. New member Debbie Burtnett stepped forward to organize the event. Debbie did an outstanding job, putting together a display team with Jerry Bates and Bob Ballou, making phone calls and sending emails, coordinating with fair personnel, contacting and scheduling members to man the booth, supplying display material, display setup and tear down, plus putting in some serious hours hosting the booth.

A meaningful presence at the fair has to be a team effort. We must not forget the fair booth success ultimately depends on our loyal members who volunteer their time each year. They act as docents and spend hours at the display answering questions, taking notes from visitors and promoting our work.

Special thanks to this year's volunteers:

Bob Ballou, Marilyn Burnett, Luanne Foxford, Don and Mary Glaser, Art Larson, Olive McDonough, Roy and Sheila Rinker (scheduled), Yvonne Thorpe, Joan Vosler, Mr. W. Lynn Williams and Ed Zeiger.

"Did You Know?"

From our Research Coordinator, Carl Vest
cvest0055@aol.com

While researching the South Hill pioneering Mosolf family for an article it was found that when reading the public record you can't trust any spelling. For example, we have found that Mosolf, the traditional spelling, can also be found in the records spelled as: Musolf, Musolff, Mausalf, Muosolph, and Mossol. Does anyone know of any other variation that we could record?

REQUEST FOR HELP: The Society is trying to identify the paths Hill residents used to travel between South Hill and the valley areas of Puyallup and Tacoma before the street and road network was developed. We know of some trails, but not all. Do any of you readers have any old family histories that would help us identify these paths? We'd like to hear from you.

Do you have a story about old times on South Hill?

Personal experiences and past events are of interest to all the members, and it makes for a better newsletter! We are glad to assist, if you wish, with writing or editing your article.
The Editor: Jerry Bates, jerrybates@mac.com, 253-848-6558

Society Help Needed

We need storage & office space
Contact Paul Hackett 253-845-7691

**VCR to DVD transferring
(Equipment furnished)**
Contact Ben Peters 253-845-7028

Newsletter helpers, contributors, proof readers
Contact Jerry Bates 253-848-6558, jerrybates@mac.com

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

From the Treasurer
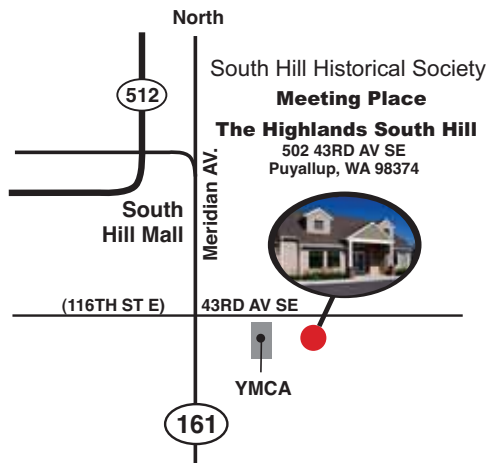
by Ben Peters

A warm welcome to our new members:

Susan Beals
Debbie Burtnett
Dave & Patti Curtiss

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.

Where to Find Us

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

North

512

South Hill Mall

Meridian AV.

South Hill Historical Society
Meeting Place
The Highlands South Hill
502 43RD AV SE
Puyallup, WA 98374

(116TH ST E)   **43RD AV SE**

YMCA

161

South Hill Historical Society Officers

President, Don Glaser
Vice-President, Bob Ballou
Secretary, Yvonne Thorpe
Research Coordinator, Carl Vest
Treasurer, Ben Peters
Newsletter Editor, Jerry Bates
Public Relations Coordinator, Paul Hackett

Our Current Members

Andy G. Anderson	Olive McDonough
John & Ruth Anderson	Laurienne Stewart Minnich
Jim & Elizabeth Anema	Ronald Moe
Bob Ballou	Carolyn Nelson
Jerry Bates	Dorothy Nelson
Susan Beals	Juanita Nordin
Katherine Bennett	Mark & Dorothy Norris
Marilyn Burnett	Christopher & Gloria O'Kelly
Debbie Burtnett	Ron & Lois Pearson
Roger Bush	Wes & Suzy Perkinson
Vernon Cox	Ben Peters
Dave & Patti Curtiss	Robin Reich
Bob Crabb	Bill Riley
James H. Dixon	Bernice Fisher Rinehart
Pat Drake	Roy and Sheila Rinker
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Arthur & Luverne Foxford	Helen Rohlman
Dianna & Fred Fritz	Earl Root
Don and Mary Glaser	Stan & Margery Salmon
Hazel Whitford Miller Goheen	Nancy M. Scraggin
Calvin & Amy Goings	Clara K. Singer (Wallace)
David Hackett	Bonnie Starkel
Paul Hackett	Lori Stock
James Hawley	Bill Stover
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Cecil & Doris Herbert	Ralph & Yvonne Thorpe
Evelyn Swalander Hess	Margo L & Joe Tucci
Charles & Maybelle Hoenhous	Carl Vest
Matt Holm	Neil & Celia Vincent
Ernest Hopp	Joan Vosler
Dale Huff	Vivian Wepfer
Jim Kastama	W. Lynn Williams
John Knierim	Lenore Nicolet Winton
Art Larson	Hans Zeiger
Marvella Massie	

Updated Roster Available
*A printed roster including members' home and email addresses, plus phone number is available on request **(restricted to members only)**. Call Ben Peters at 253-845-7028.*

Dues Reminder
Treasurer Ben Peters will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date.

South Hill
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HERITAGE CORRIDOR

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

To: