

Will It Stay or Will It Go?

A community grassroots effort has been brewing for several years to save the old brick Firgrove School building. As things stand, the fate of the old school could be left to a wrecking ball sometime after the new Firgrove Elementary is up and running, 2012-13 (assuming the March school bond and levy passes). The new school will be located on the existing school property, a good distance back from busy Meridian Ave.

Role of the Society

The South Hill Historical Society did not originate, nor do we take ownership of the effort to save the school. However, many of our members have deep roots on South Hill and a soft spot for the old building. It's not just emotions involved here. A good case can be made for saving the building. Not much, man made, dating before the 1960s, is left standing on the hill (excluding some old homes and what remains of the Old

Mill dance hall). If ever there were a case to be made for preserving some physical connection with South Hill's past, saving the old 1935 brick building would be it. There are many more benefits to the community and our society regarding future uses of the school, but that's another article.

As an "historical" society we strongly support any effort to preserve this link with our past.

The Save the School Committee

A *Save The School* Committee has recently been formed. These volunteers had their first meeting at Don and Mary Glaser's home last December. Members of this group have also been attending school board meetings where they speak on behalf of saving the old school building. Contact has also been established with the Tacoma Tribune. The highly motivated group has already

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The old brick Firgrove Elementary School connects today's South Hill with its past. The original Firgrove School was 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. Many old timers on the hill remember attending the brick school shown above in its early days when grades one through eight were taught in the school.

Old School Continued

hit the streets getting many signatures on a petition to support their cause.

The Apostle Letter

During our January executive board meeting our Society secretary, Joan Vosler was given the task to write Tony Apostle, Superintendent of the Puyallup School District, confirming our (South Hill Historical Society) support of the effort to save the school. We also asked for Mr. Apostle's support. He returned a detailed response, acknowledging his support and outlined the issues involved from his perspective. He laid out the different possible scenarios regarding the school. His conclusion: we should organize a fund drive and buy the building and have it moved to another site.

Mr. Apostle also stressed the school's fate is not up to him, but ultimately a future school board decision. The board may decide to spare it for some district use, demolish the building and sell the property to the highest bidder, sell the building to be moved to another site, or some yet to be determined option. The bottom line is whatever they feel has the most benefit to the school district. However, Mr. Apostle reminded us this decision could be influenced by any public input.

Of course, the timing of all the above pivots on the voters approving the 2009 school bond and levy.

The decision of what to do with the old school structures and property bordering Meridian is not addressed in the current bond levy vote. The school board will deal with this as a separate issue after the construction of the new Firgrove Elementary is completed.

This issue may take years to resolve even if the bond levy does pass. If the levy fails things will be further delayed.

No excuse for complacency though. If anyone wants to join the *Save The School* project, call Don or Mary Glaser 253-845-2885

Little Piece of Heaven called Woodland

By Beverly Knoll

My maternal grandparents, Charles and Belle Sharp, bought 10 acres located on 104th Street between Woodland and Fruitland Avenues, in the Shea and Nolans Five Acre Tracts in the Woodland area in about 1907.

At the time, Grandpa was a bartender at Mike

Shea's Saloon on the corner of 24th St. and Pacific Avenue in Tacoma, and Grandma worked in the Elite Restaurant next door, which was owned by her brother, Jon "Denny" McPherson.

Over the next few years the family, including my mother who was only about three or four years old at the time, would come out to Woodland to work on their place, at first by horse and wagon and later on the Interurban Rail Line which ran down 104th Street in front of their property.

My grandfather first built a one-room cabin on the property. In the middle of that one room he built a huge natural stone fireplace, a work of art and a skill he had learned from his father and grandfather in England. Later on he built a root cellar—out of the same natural stone—a thing of beauty we called the "rock house." It still stands on the property today.

He planted a small orchard, consisting of a half dozen apple trees and an Italian plum, and two cherry trees near the house, "one for eatin' and one for pies." After much work and clearing of trees, the Sharpes were finally able to settle permanently on their little farm in Woodland in about 1912.

There was a wonderful natural spring on the lower portion of the property where Grandpa built a pond and stocked it with a few trout. One day Grandpa walked down to his pond and came upon a neighbor boy who had fished out all the trout! The boy's father offered to restock the fish, but Grandpa said, "No, that's okay, your boy probably had a lot of fun."

Grandpa also dug a good well a few feet from the pond. Sometimes in very dry summers, the Sharpes' well was the last one with water and people came with their horses and wagons to fill wooden barrels.

Grandpa loved his little farm. He grew a vegetable garden, and loved and grew many flowers. He had a milk cow (named Bessie, of course) and a couple of hogs. The McPhersons shipped all the scraps from the restaurant in Tacoma out to grandpa's pigs via the Interurban. An early day recycling program.

My parents, Everett and Ruth Sharpe Knoll, and I moved to the place in Woodland just after the beginning of WWII. We lived for a short time in an old, partially remodeled chicken brooder house because the main house had been rented to two families. It was wartime and housing was scarce.

My father and my uncle, Carl Sharpe, worked at the Todd Shipyard in Tacoma, walking each morning to the corner of Knapp Road (104th Street) and Woodland to catch the bus, which took them to the shipyard.

Soon after our arrival from California, my father

and mother purchased the main house and some land from my grandfather. My father immediately began fixing up the old house, which had fallen into much disrepair. Dad was a good carpenter, and I remember the first thing he did was enclose the old hot water heater into a cabinet large enough for my mother to keep her broom, dustpan and dust mop out of sight also. Nice, I thought. But my mother still had to cook on a wood cook stove for many months.

The next project was to purchase a refrigerator to replace the old cooler —you know the kind that opened to the outside and had a screen on the back. Mind you, we had come from California where we had indoor plumbing and natural gas for heat and cooking.

Over the years the house was completely remodeled from the foundation (which had been non-existent) up. I remember my father digging the dirt from under the house by the wheelbarrow load, by hand, so a foundation could be poured.

I grew up on this little piece of Heaven called Woodland on South Hill. It was “out in the country” then and what a wonderful place to grow up. I, like my mother and grandfather, loved the woods that surrounded our house. My mother and I would go for walks in the woods where she taught me the names of everything that grew there. And many happy hours were spent running and playing and climbing the beautiful fir trees and swinging in, on, and from, the vine maples, and building camps among them. I still can’t believe I didn’t set fire to the woods with my campfires.

My grandparents and parents are gone now, and the old place in Woodland has since been owned by several different families.

Beverly Knoll
December 23, 2001

Thanks Yvonne



After spending two plus years as our society president Yvonne Thorpe is moving on. We all greatly appreciate her time in office. Yvonne did a great job with her professional, positive attitude presiding over our executive and general meetings. Yvonne will be hitting the books and spending all her spare time with her educational interests. Yvonne still plans on being an active member and looks forward to volunteering for fair duty next September. Thanks for your great leadership, Yvonne!

South Hill Historical Society Officers

President, **Don Glaser (acting)**
 Vice-President, **Don Glaser**
 Secretary, **Joan Vosler**
 Research Coordinator, **Carl Vest**
 Treasurer, **Ben Peters**
 Newsletter Editor, **Jerry Bates**
 Public Relations Coordinator, **Paul Hackett**

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

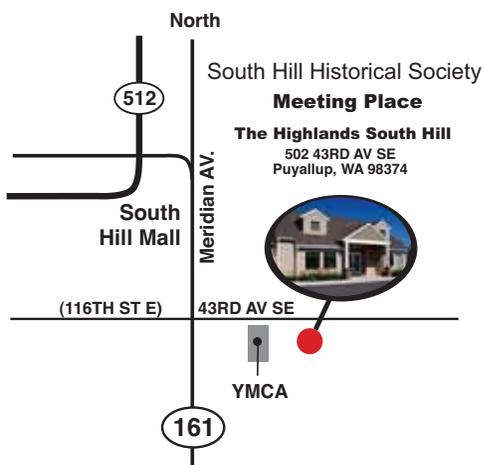
A warm welcome to our new member:
Katherine Bennett

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 our former president, Paul Hackett, at **(253) 845-7691**.



Our Current Members

Andy G. Anderson	Ronald Moe
Jim & Elizabeth Anema	Laurienne Stewart Minnich
Bob Ballou	Carolyn Nelson
Jerry Bates	Dorothy Nelson
Katherine Bennett	Juanita Nordin
Ward F. Bradley	Mark & Dorothy Norris
Marilyn Burnett	Christopher O'Kelly
Roger Bush	Ron & Lois Pearson
Bob Crabb	Wes & Suzy Perkinson
James H. Dixon	Ben Peters
Mildred A. Dobbs	Robin Reich
Pat Drake	Bill Riley
Linda Forsberg	Bernice Fisher Rinehart
Arthur & Luverne Foxford	Barbara Huff Ringo
Dianna & Fred Fritz	Roy and Sheila Rinker
Don and Mary Glaser	Vern Rockstad
William (Bill) Goelzer	Helen Rohlman
Hazel Whitford Miller Goheen	Earl Root
Calvin & Amy Goings	Frank Ryser
David Hackett	Stan & Margery Salmon
Paul Hackett	Clara K. Singer (Wallace)
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Art Larson	Vivian Wepfer
Marvella Massie	W. Lynn Williams
Olive McDonough	Lenore Nicolet Winton
	Hans Zeiger

Updated Roster Available

A printed roster including members' addresses and phone numbers is available on request. Call Ben Peters at 253-845-7028.

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To: