



History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society

Volume 8 Issue 1 Winter 2010

HERITAGE CORRIDOR

The Kupfer Ranch

by Jerry Bates

Of the early South Hill pioneer families, the Kupfers hold a special place. They were one of the earliest, if not the earliest family to take root on the hill. The location of their property was also special. Their old farmhouse stood for decades adjacent to Willows Corner, the heart of historic South Hill.

The Old House

Thanks to surviving old photographs the Kupfer farm site can be traced from the earliest times on South Hill, a log cabin surrounded by woods to a more substantial house. This house was built when the Kupfers operated a hop farm. The "big" house built in 1906 was still standing until the 1970s (see picture page 2).

As the times and needs of succeeding generations changed, the old house was in the way of progress. In 1972, this last vestige of old Kupfer ranch was gone to make room for South Hill's

first modern shopping center, the Willows Shopping Center.

Fred Kupfer Interview 1972

The house and hop ranch have vanished beneath parking lots and busy stores, but, fortunately for us, memories of one family member remained vivid.



The Kupfer log cabin built on South Hill by Alois Kupfer with some help from local Indians. This picture was taken probably around 1885. Fred Kupfer is holding the horse on the left, next to him his brother Louis, his sister Elizabeth, Jennie Evans (a school teacher boarding with the Kupfers), Henry Kupfer holding the other horse and Alois Kupfer far right.

Besides photos of the old house and farm, another link with those early times was Fred Kupfer 1874-1979. Thanks to an interview by Lori Price done for the *Puyallup Herald* in 1972, we can travel back in time on South Hill and Kupfer family history. Highlights of that interview follow.

Moving west

After spending time with his brother in Butte Montana, the young German immigrant family of Alois Kupfer and his wife Mary Ann (Huber)

Kupfer continued west to LaGrande, Oregon. Unfortunately the Indians at that time in eastern Oregon were hostile, not a good place for white settlers. The family then migrated to eastern Washington and continued west arriving at Fort Steilacoom in 1877. Shortly after arriving at Steilacoom Alois bought a homestead on South Hill, his holdings would eventually expand to 160 acres.

Isolation

Keep in mind the often-told story of the Kupfers living on the hill six months before discovering Puyallup existed. Although distances between settled areas during pioneer times seem small by modern standards, virgin forests, huge trees with dense underbrush, no roads or other form of communication left settlers very isolated. Not unlike this nations pilgrim fathers, the first winter was tough on the Kupfers. Starvation became a real possibility. Thanks to friendly local Indians showing the Kupfer boys where they discarded venison after taking deer hides, the Kupfers had meat on the table.

A Long Life

Fred was born at LaGrande Oregon in 1875. As the Kupfers made their way west to their final destination, the family continued to grow, his

sister Lena was born in Utah, twins Henry and John born at Fort Steilacoom, Louis and Elizabeth on South Hill. Fred grew up on South Hill, riding horses, hunting, fishing and enjoying the frontier life, eventually marrying and raising his own family. Fred recalls girls were scarce on South Hill in those early days; he got lucky and



Fred and Bessie (Padgett) Kupfer were married in 1905 (wedding picture, left). Above right the couple in 1967, they had three children, Mary, Fred and Paul.



During the hop growing years on the Alois Kupfer ranch a larger home was built in 1906. Alois had it built by a carpenter named “Old Man Maso” for the tidy sum of \$160 plus \$14 dollars for the chimney. Fred Kupfer, son of Alois Kupfer, (standing with cane) revisited the old house shortly before it was demolished in 1972 to make way for the Willows Shopping Center. Although only partially visible, the house appears to have had shingle siding added plus a concrete block foundation, this may account for the missing wraparound porch. The house stood where Borders Books is today.

found his lifetime mate, Bessie Padgett, a neighbor girl.

The interview of Fred by Lori Price in 1973 also included him revisiting the old farmhouse, just prior to demolition to make way for the new shopping center. Standing under the ancient apple trees, Fred pointed out all that had changed on the property. One could just imagine the memories residing in his mind of the old family ranch, South Hill and way of life long vanished.

During Fred Kupfer's long life vast changes occurred not only on South Hill, the world changed dramatically also, probably more than any other equal amount of time in our nation's history. Just imagine, he grew up during frontier times of the late 1800s and lived to see the era of commercial jetliners and man landing on the moon—quite a span of history!

Roy Rinker & Carl Vest Recognized



Roy Rinker, left, contributes a fair amount of time adding to the society's extensive files of newspaper clippings from local media, these references to our society or South Hill history all pass through Roy. He is currently completing the year of 2009. Thanks to early efforts of Paul Hackett, right, we have over 3500 newspaper clippings and microfiche copies, going back before the turn of the 20th century, all

having some relationship with South Hill. Paul holds one such example, an ad announcing the grand opening of Helen's Hallmark Shop at Willows Shopping Center in 1972.

Carl Vest, center, was also recognized for his archiving efforts. Carl has an extensive collection of historical Pierce County maps in his personal collection, used many times for society research, articles and various other inquiries.

Dawn Vogel speaks at December Meeting



Paul Hackett provided some background for speaker Dawn Vogel, Research Historian. Paul noted that \$1 was added onto all real estate title transactions by the state legislature two years ago to the Pierce County Planning Department for bids on historical society work. Historical Research Associates, Inc., in Seattle won the bid. Miss Vogel's work includes visiting 33 historical societies and four or five museums to create a catalog of historical society holdings. Her specific job is to gather the information and organize it, creating an accessible data base for Pierce County in the form of a searchable website for the public. Questions followed including the use of key words; the organization of building permits which were used as early as 1880; and other information regarding the Naches Pass Trail.

Contribution to Pierce County Fire & Rescue



Paul Hackett, right, presents to Matt Holm, EMT Pierce County Fire & Rescue, an old scrapbook plus missing news story clippings referencing the fire department. The department's archives had been missing clippings from (1950-1965). Matt stated that a ladies auxiliary used to organize their scrapbook to document and arrange in chronological order the events of the department, but somewhere along the line, this was forgotten. This year "they hope to put it together."

The Start of Settlement on South Hill

by Carl Vest

Undoubtedly we'd all agree that South Hill is a very congested place. However, it hasn't always been that way. Settlement on the Hill, as we now know it, is actually a rather recent event. So, when did it all start? First, we should never lose sight of the fact that unknown generations of Native Americans were here before the coming of Euro-Americans. South Hill was in fact at one time a part of a major trail system that connected the eastern and western tribes of this part of North America. It was used for purposes of trade, to communicate, hunt for game, conduct war, and other activities. Historians usually

refer to it as the Ancient Klickitat Trail.

By about 1800 explorers had mapped the coastline and major rivers throughout Puget Sound. Overland parties had also started entering the region by this time. For example, the Lewis and Clark expedition, while not coming as far north as South Hill, reached the Northwest in 1805. Further, from about 1800 to 1850 the fur trade flourished throughout the mountains of the west, however there is little evidence that it was a significant undertaking in the Cascade watersheds.

It would appear that the first non-native settlers near South Hill (as opposed to explorers and traders) were the employees of the Hudson Bay Company (HBC). They arrived around 1833. Technically speaking HBC did not put settlers onto South Hill. However, its agricultural activities did reach into the vicinity.

During the 1840s to 1850s recognized settlements started to appear near South Hill. The Donation Land Claim Act drew people to Washington Territory but there is no record that any petition for one was ever filed on South Hill. There are recorded claims along the Puyallup River, in the Spanaway region, and at other points near the Hill, but none on the highland itself.

Immigrants were headed to the Pacific Northwest in ever increasing numbers by the 1850s. By then settlement land in Oregon was becoming scarce and more and more people were coming north into Washington Territory. Most of these groups that have been identified moved onto local river deltas and none have been traced to South Hill.

Government records show that only three cabins existed on South Hill in 1872 when the original map of Township 19 was made. We don't know how many people lived in those structures, but probably fewer than a dozen. So it appears that South Hill was one of the last of the local regions to develop. It was rugged, covered with old growth trees, and just wasn't inviting until all other options had been exhausted.

Dozens of farms can be identified on South Hill by the late 1880s. Thus it can be reasoned that the settlement and development of the Hill started about the middle to late 1870s or early 1880s. While major growth was still decades away this was the beginning. It is interesting to note that there are still second and third generation descendants of these early families still living here.

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.*

We have a Website

www.southhillhistory.com

by Jerry Bates



Home page for our new Website

We have long talked about the need to have our Society on the World Wide Web, and starting this month, we're finally—on line!

I have been building the site in my spare time, little by little, on my home computer. My general idea was to get the exposure for our society only a Web site can provide. But, going beyond that, I wanted the site to be more than just a billboard

advertising our society, where we meet and how to join. I wanted to build a research tool, consolidate in one place all the stories and published material that has been created over the years by some of our dedicated society members. Yes, we have a newsletter and a monthly column in the *Puyallup Herald*, but not everyone reads or has access to these publications. In the future some printed pamphlet or book may be created. However, I was afraid over time the articles will be forgotten, scattered about in file drawers or on a few members hard drives, the newsletter trashed and documents we produce gathering dust, forgotten on bookshelves, a lot of effort probably would never be accessible or available to the public going forward.

Building the site was fun but also a puzzle. I found the biggest challenge was how to organize, in a logical fashion, a large amount of historical information, society information and personal memories we have documented; how to break things down so someone could skip around the site and not get lost or confused. I wanted to keep it simple to navigate, and compelling to the general public. Also, I had in mind the value such a site would have when used as a research tool for students or anyone interested in their local community's history.

I do realize the site cannot and does not attempt to represent all the hard work and various activities done over the years, archiving, interviews, organizing meetings, community involvement etc. However, I do plan on adding to the site; maybe including some of our events, having all the newsletters, available for easy download, a calendar..... Any other ideas, let me know.

I would be interested in your feedback. The site is not set in stone, and I can alter it and add to it. I'm sure it will evolve and grow as time goes on.

“Did you know?”

From our Treasurer Ben Peters

The United States Postal Service recognizes South Hill or Puyallup as an official destination for mail addressed to residents and businesses in Zip Codes 98373, 98374 and 98375. This may be old news to some of you, its been in effect since the new South Hill post office branch was built at Meridian and 136 streets in 1999. We can thank the South Hill Community Council for making the original request.

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

Personal experiences and past events are of interest to all our 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

History On The Hill is published quarterly
Copyright 2010

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 member:

Leslie Huff

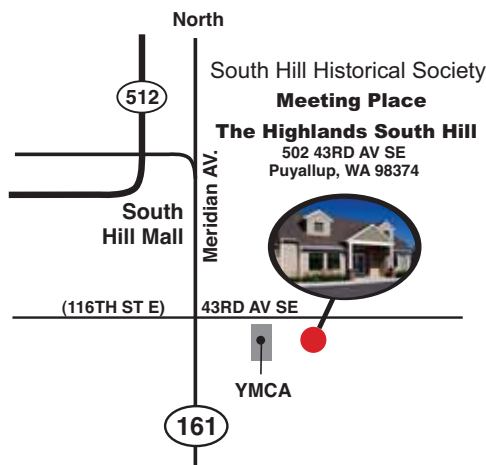
It's Tax Time!

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**.



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

Updated Roster Available

A printed roster including members' home and email address, 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.



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

To: