

South Hill - History Marker

South Hill Heritage Corridor

For hundreds of years, South Hill has been at the crossroads of some of our nation's most fundamental changes. The South Hill Heritage Corridor traces four historic trade routes the stories of which, contributed to the rich history of our state.

The earliest native inhabitants used this corridor to trade with other native peoples on both sides of the Cascade Mountains. The early homesteaders, eager to build a new life in the wide-open spaces of the Oregon Territory, also used this trail during the trying and dangerous westward migration.

This corridor continued to expand as the military established outposts and the resulting commerce between Fort Steilacoom and Fort Walla Walla attracted even more pioneers to the Puget Sound area and the settlement of early hop, fruit, and dairy farmers. Over the centuries, the South Hill Heritage Corridor has played an important role in the changes and challenges of a nation, a state, and a people.

Ancient Klickitat Trail (Pre-1700's)

For hundreds of years, native inhabitants of Puget Sound used the ancient trail as a diverse and expansive east-west trade route. The Klickitat Tribe of present-day eastern Washington and the Puyallup, Steilacoom, and Nisqually peoples of Puget Sound pursued game, trade, and exchanges across this very early trail.

Naches Pass Trail (1840's)

As time moved forward, so did the expansion of the United States. By the early to mid-1800's, westward pioneers began pouring into present day Oregon and Washington. Early residents, with hopes of diverting Oregon Trail settlers directly to the Puget Sound area, raised funds and petitioned the local and national government to construct a more direct route via the Naches Pass.

Military Road (1860's)

As elsewhere in the young nation, the establishment of military outposts usually accompanied exploration and settlement, Washington Territory was no different. As settlement in the northwest continued, the strains of a fast-approaching national conflict were to be felt in Puget Sound. With sprawling encampments on both sides of the Cascades, the movement of soldiers and supplies eastward along the Military Road for the approaching Civil War became paramount.

Upper Puyallup to Steilacoom County Road (1870's)

The last three decades of the 19th century witnessed wave after wave of settlement in the area that would become South Hill. The county road that had begun as a trade route for native inhabitants hundreds of years earlier, was now an important hub of agricultural commerce linking the fast growing communities of the Puyallup and Orting valleys to the east, with the newer settlements of Parkland and Spanaway and the well established town of Steilacoom to the west.

For well over 300 years, South Hill has been a witness to history in the making. The South Hill Heritage Corridor stands as a monument to the people and events that took place along this important east-west trade route. For more information on the history of South Hill and the Heritage Corridor project, please contact the South Hill Historical Society.

The South Hill Heritage Corridor was officially recognized by Pierce County with the adoption of County Council Resolution R2001-59S2 on June 19, 2001.

The South Hill Heritage Corridor was dedicated by the community of South Hill in a public celebration during the second week of October 2001, the 148th Anniversary of the Longmire-Byles Wagon Train crossing over the Naches Pass Trail through South Hill.