

CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF MILL CREEK

The City of Mill Creek is a part of a larger vision that has been developing since the 1950's, though its name has varied from that of the home of the Greek gods (Olympus) to the Chinook Indians' idea of open, free and outdoors (Klahanie).

Although there have been settlers and farms in the area for many years, relevant history begins with the purchase in the 1930's by Dr. Garhart of 800 acres, which would later become the major portion of Mill Creek. Dr. Garhart was known as a staunch naturalist who performed extensive inventories of the natural resources of the site and made numerous observations of the wildlife and vegetation. The larger Garhart property was surrounded by several families on smaller tracts (20-60 acres).

Dr. Tony Levitsis, a former Mill Creek City Councilman, tells of the folklore surrounding one such family, the Garletts.

"They owned 50 acres, sold off ten to pay back taxes, and then moved deep into the woods. There they built a cabin on what today is the 13th tee of the Mill Creek Golf Course. Access was over a rugged trail through the property that is now Larry's Smokehouse. The depression was a lean time; the family raised chickens, pigs, gardened and even did some logging; anything to survive. The family of five lived in a cabin that measured 15 feet square and stood about 5 1/2 feet high. It had a crude door, an opening that passed for a window, a wood stove that supplied heat and cooking and a dirt floor, which was later planked over. Water came from a spring in the winter. During the summer the spring dried up and they had to carry water from Penny Creek. The cabin is long gone, replaced by the Laurel subdivision."

One remnant of the efforts of the Garharts, Garletts and other families which still does exist is the dam and reservoir constructed in 1935 just east of the intersection of SR 527 and 164th Street S.E. It was then named Wintermutes Corner and is still referred to as such on many maps.

DEVELOPMENT OF MILL CREEK

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Planned Residential Development (PRD) for Mill Creek in 1974 described the development activities as follows:

"In 1965 Northwestern Properties organized a series of partnerships which optioned and controlled approximately 3,000 acres. The principal owner was Mr. Elmer Kerns who purchased his ownership from Garhart on a real estate contract basis.

At this time a planned new community, to be called Olympus, was proposed. The Olympus plan was a forerunner of the present proposed new community. Basically, it differed from the current plans in terms of the land use layout, and also, an overall higher density of uses would have occurred than with the proposed project. The investigations for planning and financing were oriented toward federal participation. In the course of such investigations, the feasibility for obtaining such long-term assistance was diminished and alternate means were sought.

In 1968, Howard T. Harstad, a local consultant, agreed to take over the options and brought in the Morrison-Knudsen interests to supply the required financial backing. At a critical point in the conception of the project one of the principals of the Morrison-Knudsen firm who had personally backed the venture on a corporate level met with a fatal airplane accident. After a subsequent corporate review of the project status, the Morrison-Knudsen firm decided to withdraw their support and concentrate their resources on other ongoing ventures.

After the Morrison-Knudsen financial assistance was withdrawn, Harstad also divested his interest. During this time, the Boise Cascade Company had expressed an interest in taking over the project on a self-sufficient basis. The economic downturn in 1969 and 1970 due to a drastic reduction in aerospace employment caused Boise Cascade to abandon their plans and return control to the Kerns interests.

During the middle of 1973, Tokyu Land Development (Hawaii), Ltd., acquired control of the land through options (1,200 acres \pm) and assigned their interest to the United Development Corporation (with the Ohbayashi Corporation) who was at the time conducting planning and engineering studies, which resulted in a comprehensive master plan for the new community."

The consulting firm of Wilsey and Ham was hired in 1973 to prepare a master plan, which was submitted to Snohomish County in January 1974; amendments to the comprehensive plan were made in February and March and the contract rezoned was signed in April. The restrictive covenants were signed in 1975.

The contract rezoned by Snohomish County included the overall Master Development Plan. In the next eight years, all nine sector plans would be prepared and accepted. The final sector plan anticipated a citywide total of over 4,600 dwelling units with a population of 12-14,000 when construction was completed.

The Sector Plans were implemented by individual Division of Development Plans and Subdivision Plats.

The City of Mill Creek, then consisting of 1,160 acres, was incorporated in 1983. The primary impetus for incorporation was the desire by the residents to receive a more equitable tax structure and improve police protective services. Being an unincorporated territory served by the Alderwood and Silver Lake water districts, the Everett School District,

two fire districts and three telephone exchanges, as well as having a Bothell mailing address, left the area without a community identity. The City Council was elected and the Planning Commission was appointed. In 1987, the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board was established.

The City of Mill Creek has gone through significant changes since incorporation in 1983. The City has doubled in area as annexations have occurred. Since incorporation, 14 annexations ranging between 2 and 300 acres in size have been approved by the City. As of February 2001, the City had a total area of 2,365 acres. As of April 2004, the City's population is estimated to be 12,760.

The majority of the developable land within the City of Mill Creek has now been developed or is under construction. All of the sectors in the original Mill Creek Master Plan have been developed. The Mill Creek Town Center is under construction and the majority of the SR 527 Corridor Subarea has been developed with multifamily residential neighborhoods. SR 527 has been widened to five lanes between 164th Street SE and SR 96. This development activity implements the City's Land Use Plan to create a vibrant, livable community, where residents can live, work and play.

CREATING A NAMESAKE

In 2000, the City was successful in officially designating a small creek, locally referred to as Smokehouse Creek, as Mill Creek.

The idea for establishing an official name for the creek was generated by the Mill Creek City Council. Because the creek flows through the Town Center site (then undeveloped), they reasoned, it should be given a name that complements the Town Center and establishes a namesake for the City. After some discussion, it was decided that the creek should be named Mill Creek.

City planners appeared before the State Board of Geographic Names, and in December 2000, the City's request to name the creek Mill Creek was approved.