

MOUNT SI TRAIL, DEDICATED

Introductory Note

On Sunday, May 10, 1931, the people of North Bend and vicinity assembled at the foot of Mount Si to dedicate a new bridge and the new "William H. Taylor" trail to the summit of Mount Si. Mr. Taylor is one of the most esteemed pioneers of that part of the State of Washington. He was the founder of North Bend and is remarkably alert for one of his years. He supervised and did valiant work on the building of the trail. His neighbors named the trail in his honor, but, like most pioneers, he is modest and refers to it as the "Mount Si" Trail. He was appealed to for a record of the dedication and also for a record of the man for whom the mountain was named. The peak is well known to all who cross over the Cascade Range by way of the Snoqualmie Pass route. He would much prefer to talk it over and let some one else do the writing but he finally consented to help out.—Editor.

The Dedication

Probably the best way to tell about the dedication exercises is to send this clipping from the *Snoqualmie Valley Record*:

"Over a thousand people were present last Sunday at the dedication ceremonies marking the opening of the new bridge over the south fork of the Snoqualmie River and the Wm. H. Taylor Memorial Trail to the top of Mt. Si. Interesting talks were given by Prof. E. S. Meany of the University of Washington and County Commissioner Jack Earley and others.

"While a larger number were expected to compete in the first annual trail hike to the summit of this beautiful mountain and back, forty-five out-door enthusiasts were all that cared to try this strenuous exercise on such a warm summer day. The hikers were dressed in every conceivable costume, from racing shorts to overalls or complete hiking equipment. Five of those making the attempt were women.

"Albert S. May, an experienced mountain climber, who was born in North Bend, but who now resides in Renton, made the fastest time up the mountain and back again. He stepped off the eight miles, four up a 4,000-foot climb and four back, in 1 hour and 24 minutes. Three minutes behind him was Harold Wilson of North Bend and Clare Thrasher, also of North Bend, was third in 1 hour and 29 minutes.

"Five women started but only two of them finished. Lois Joyner made the round trip in three hours flat and Mary Mathews took three hours and a half. Both are from North Bend.

"A sturdy Seattle youth, Rignell Thorgerson, was first in the division for boys 16 years or younger. He sped the eight miles in 2:01. Behind him were Cecil Thompson, North Bend, 2:15; and Carl Nelson of North Bend, 2:16.

"Cash and merchandise prizes were given in the three divisions and the North Bend Commercial Club, which sponsored the event this year is so well pleased with the result that it is planned to stage it annually."

Naming the Mountain

The mountain was named for "Uncle Si" whose full name was Josiah Merritt.

He was living on an eighty-acre farm in the State of Ohio at the time of the great trek to the California gold diggings. Leaving a wife and three small children (one a baby), he left with thousands of others to make his fortune. No luck came his way.

After a few years a report came from the north country of rich diggings in the Carriboo Country of British Columbia and away he went with lots of other unfortunates for that Carriboo Country. Some went by sailing vessels for Bellingham Bay and the Sumas Route, others by way of Fraser River, while a few came to Seattle and went through Snoqualmie Pass and then northward. He was one of those who started on the Snoqualmie Route.

Arriving at the Snoqualmie Prairie, he found living here J. W. Borst and the Kellogg Brothers. The land looked so good to him that he concluded to stop here and take a claim. He settled on and acquired about four hundred acres between the south and middle forks of the Snoqualmie River. Here he built a cabin and started farming.

The only way to make a dollar was to raise hogs, make bacon and take it to Seattle. This is what he had to do to get it to market: First, use oxen and sled to get out to South Fork; then to carry it across the river on his back; then by ox-sled again to J. W. Borst's place, two and one-half miles to the main river; then in canoe two miles to Snoqualmie Falls; then down over the cliffs on his back to the mouth of Tokul Creek; then in canoe down Snoqualmie and Snohomish Rivers to Puget Sound and around to Schwabachers in Seattle.

Now this man was handicapped by having the cords of his left foot cut off with a scythe while haying and when his foot healed he had to walk on the side of it and could not make much speed. In farming he got a small pony, which he rode and guided the plow with a long handle and drove the oxen at the same time under great difficulties.

At one time, while splitting some cedar, quite a number of Indians came around him. He had lost a few articles and he accused the Indians of taking them. An Indian grabbed up a piece of cedar and hit him a hard blow but did not knock him out. He grabbed that Indian, downed him and would have choked him to death only for the Indian calling to his boy who picked up an ax and struck Mr. Merritt a glancing blow on the head. Other Indians interfered when the fighters got up and the Indians went away. His cabin was burned down twice and he accused the Indians of doing it.

Years went by and he finally sold \$400 worth of bacon. He went back to Ohio after an absence of twenty-three years without having written home once. When he came near his old home, he saw a tall young man leaning against the house. He went inside. There was his wife and the tall young man was the baby he had not seen in twenty-three years. His wife never married although his neighbors had tried to get her to. She said: "I will never marry until I know Si is dead."

He induced his wife to sell the old home and come with him to Washington Territory. She came and brought the six-foot baby. How he got this woman over on the ranch, I do not know unless he waded the river and carried her across. After living there two years and not seeing another woman's face, the awful lonesomeness affected her mind. Her daughter and son-in-law came out here about 1875. They stayed one year and then took the mother over east of the mountains where she soon died.

Josiah Merritt was alone again. He was getting old. He finally sold his land and went down below the Falls to live with Jim Kimble, a squaw-man who had lived beside him as a neighbor on Snoqualmie Prairie. He got down with pneumonia one February day and died in three days. He was buried in the grave-yard at Fall City where J. W. Borst, James Taylor and other old timers are buried.

All that Merritt lacked of being a second Enoch Arden was that he did not find his wife married to another.

WILLIAM H. TAYLOR