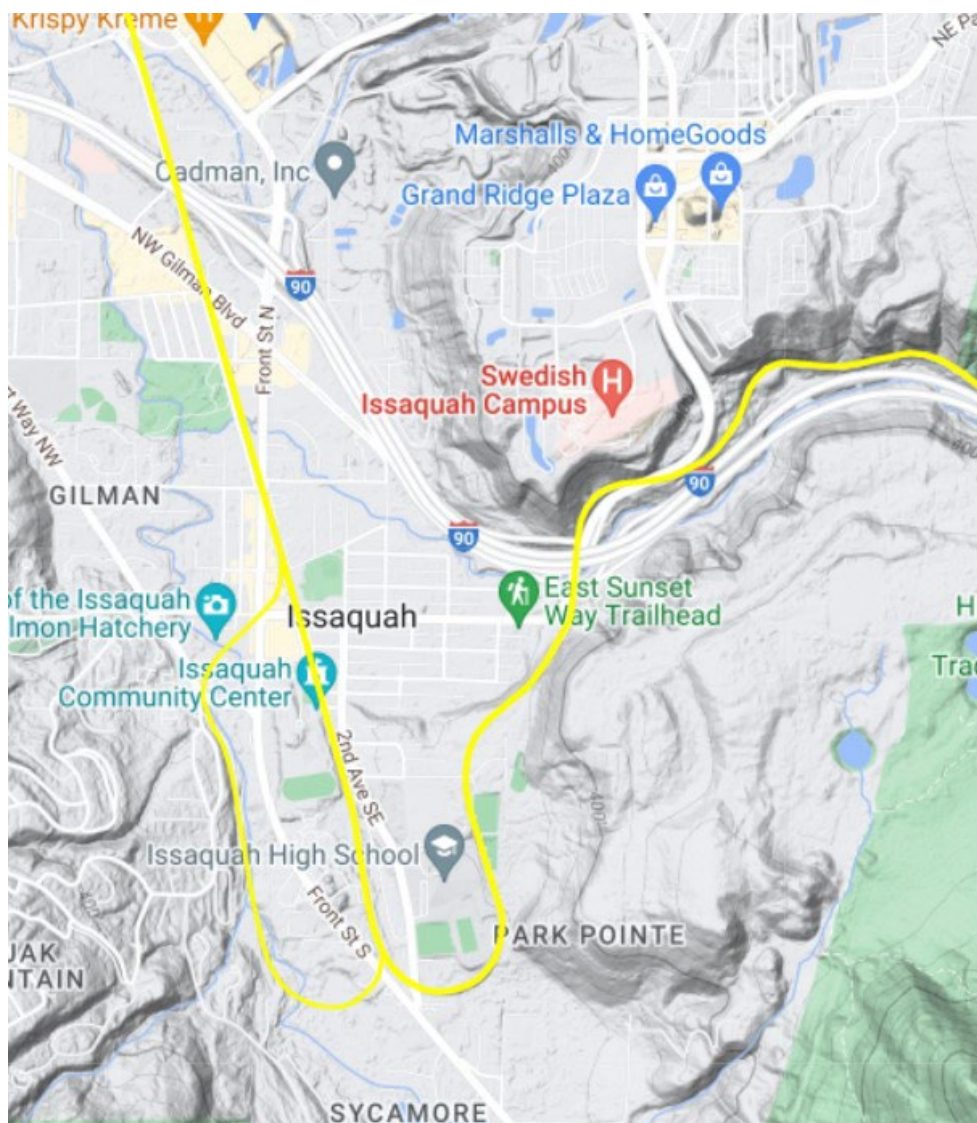


## History in Your Backyard

By John Carpita

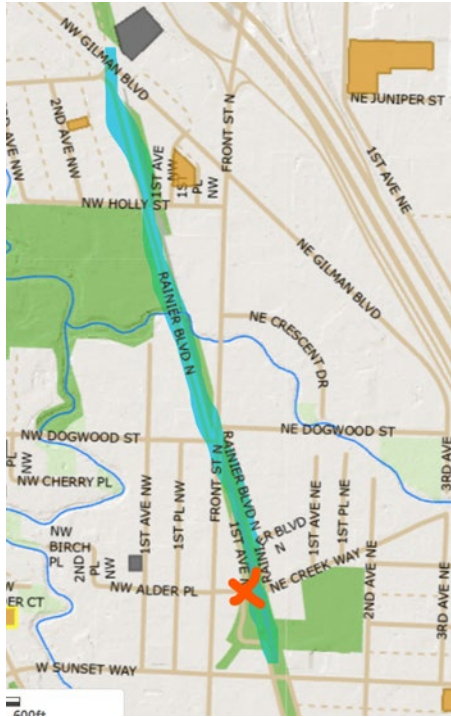
In 1998, I and other public works folks from Washington spent two weeks in Turkey (after hosting a Turkish delegation in 1996). Please follow this [LINK](#) to an article I wrote for the Chapter Newsletter about that trip. On the trip I read a book about Turkey, entitled *Turkish Reflections*. A quote from the introduction to this book resonates with me:

“There are clues all over Turkey to this instinct for revival and survival. A street meanders where a path was. A wall is rebuilt where a house has fallen. A space is left that once was an agora, because it has always been an open space, not for logical reasons, but for the habit of conserving, of not crossing the unimaginable barriers of change.’



Are there clues to your city's public works history hidden in plain sight? In Issaquah, where I live, there are examples galore.

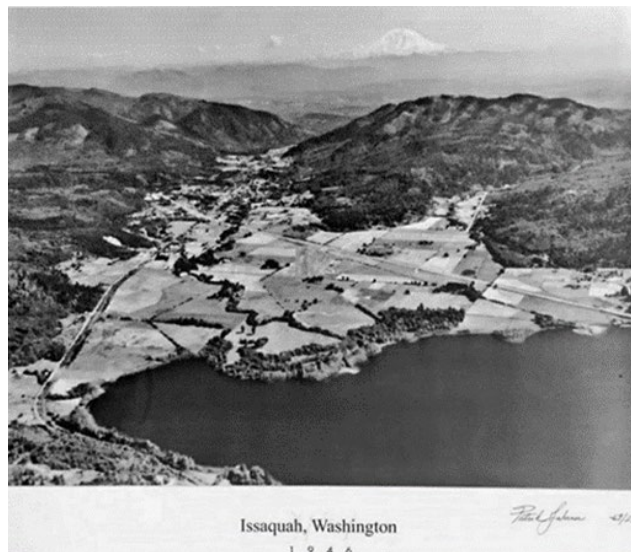
Until the 1940s there was passenger train service between Seattle and Issaquah. An extensive set of train lines and spurs served the dairying, mining, and logging industries in and around Issaquah. The map shows (in yellow) the railroads in the early 1950s. A remnant of that system still exists in the form of the historic train depot (red X), now a museum, very near the Issaquah City Hall at E Sunset and Rainier Avenue and railroad tracks (blue) from E Sunset to Gilman Boulevard along Rainier Avenue.



So, what happened to the rest of the railroad tracks in an around Issaquah. Well, what tracks have not been swallowed by Interstate Highway construction are now streets or trails. Issaquah has converted the railroad right of way from Sunset along the sweeping curve of the railroad in south Issaquah to trails. When cross-country runners swoop along the convenient path adjacent to Issaquah High School they may not even think about loping along on a piece of Issaquah's railroad heritage. Patrons of the Community Center probably aren't aware that the award-winning concrete and brick trail that is perfect for a leisurely stroll once hosted trains full of coal destined for Seattle. If folks walk along Issaquah Creek using a convenient gravel road in the Wildwood Blvd vicinity, they probably don't think about that road being a railroad spur that served the coal mine shafts that burrowed into Squak Mountain.

Puzzled about some somewhat incongruous open space or a trail/road that cuts across the city's grid system? Contact your local historical society.

(B&W images following are courtesy of the Issaquah Historical Society)



Issaquah, Washington

1946



Many Issaquah oldtimers remember the trestle that carried steam locomotives, like this one in May 1957, high above the East Fork of Issaquah Creek. The trestle, located near where Sunset Way now joins Interstate 90, was torn down after regular train service stopped between Issaquah and Snoqualmie Pass. Photo courtesy of Warren Wing.

## Looking back

In this photograph from 1910, the Issaquah High Trestle is shown at the end of what is now Sunset Way as it enters the on-ramp to Interstate 90. The home on the left has been remodeled and expanded, but it is still standing at 760 E. Sunset Way. As construction begins on the new Sunset interchange, the house will be removed. The trestle, built in 1888, was torn down in 1975 to make way for I-90.

*Photo courtesy of the  
Issaquah Historical Society*



# Abandoned rail lines become favorite trails

by Andrew McKeon

It's hard to imagine a locomotive chugging through the woods along Laughing Jacobs Creek.

The vision of trains clinging to the steep slopes of Squak Mountain belongs in the pages of "The Little Engine That Could," rather than the annals of local history.

But there's no denying the evidence of railroads on the Plateau, Grand Ridge, and the rest of the Issaquah Alps. Flat, even grades flow past second-growth firs and along creeks, reminding us that time changes the land and our way of moving through it.

The railroad grades are tell-tale relics of Issaquah's past, when short-line freight trains carried coal and timber off the hills, and mainlines took the products to Seattle or over Stampede Pass.

Interstate highways and semitrucks made most railroads obsolete after World War II. But the demise of the lines are now hikers' rewards.

Abandoned railroads have become some of the Issaquah area's favorite trails. They're flat, gentle and usually follow a direct line from one point to another.

Railroad grades are "natural attractions" for hikers, bikers and horse riders, says Bill Longwell, a Snoqualmie Valley resident and author of a well-used guide to Tiger Mountain trails. "They're usually pretty scenic and they often follow water courses. They're easy walking."

So easy, in fact, that Longwell has even taken blind friends hiking on Tiger Mountain's railroad grades.

Railroad grades are so prevalent that the Issaquah Alps Trails Club used them as the foundations for many of its oldest and most popular trails. Tiger Mountain, for instance, has between 30 and 40 miles of old grades that have been transformed into hiking trails.

The railroads were built at the turn of the century to cart timber off the mountain before trucks were up to the task. Later, rubber-tired roads often were built on railroad grades, taking advantage of the trains' insistence on a gentle route. Trains typically can't climb more than a four-

The "linear parks," as "Rail-Trails" author Fred Wert, calls the rail lines, are often the easiest trail routes, because the rights-of-way have been designated for years. Plus, most already have a gravel base.

He points out that Seattle's Burke-Gilman Trail is a former rail line that has become one of the nation's premiere mixed-use urban trails.

Issaquah was brought up on trains, which carried away its natural resources. Today, abandoned rail lines lead to old tie mills on Squak

Mountain, logging camps on Tiger Mountain and coal mines on Grand Ridge and Cougar Mountain.

The main lines, closer to the valley floor, make better trails because they aren't as overgrown and lead to more common destinations.

A few of Issaquah's most popular rail-trails follow:

## City of Issaquah Trail

Certainly the most familiar—and one of the most convenient—trails for Issaquah residents, this route is still a working railroad line for part of its length. It was originally built in 1890 by the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad.

The through-town trail is being considered as a piece of the trans-Washington trail from Seattle to Spokane, but residents can take it just to get a cup of coffee.

**'People just seem to like railroads. They like the history and looking for artifacts.'**

— Bill Longwell hiker and trail guide author

Start at City Hall South on East Sunset Way. If you want to walk on sidewalks, turn north, past the restored Issaquah depot, across Front Street, past the Darigold plant to Gilman Boulevard.

You can follow the line all the way to Redmond, but you may have to yield to a locomotive or two. Darigold still ships butter on the route, and other jurisdictions have their eyes on it if the "butter run" ever stops. King County Parks planners want to turn it into an Issaquah-to-Redmond hiking and biking trail. The Issaquah Historical Society would like to run a vintage dinner train on the line all the way to Woodinville.

If you don't want to walk on sidewalks, turn south from city hall. The route passes Issaquah High School and eventually doubles back on itself, coming out on East Sunset Way and continuing towards High

Issaquah Creek Trail This two-mile trail is an extension of the City of Issaquah Trail and parallels 1-90 from Issaquah to High Point. Compared with Tiger Mountain trails, it's relatively uncrowded and is short enough to make a nice diversion on a sunny afternoon.

Park either on the north side of I-90 at Exit 22 or at the Lake Tradition trailhead off East Sunset Way in Issaquah.

## Laughing Jacobs Trail

One of the Sammamish Plateau's few formal rail-trails, this connects the Hans Jensen Youth Camp on East Lake Sammamish Parkway with the Providence Point area of Southeast 43rd Way.

Beware before you begin, this trail is hard to find from the bottom, and it's easy to get boxed in the steep Laughing Jacobs Creek Canyon.

To get there from the parkway, park in the boat launch area, cross the road and walk across the meadow. Cross the creek and stay to the north. The railroad grade heads uphill just south of Southeast 43rd, winding through a housing development still under construction before dead-ending in woods.

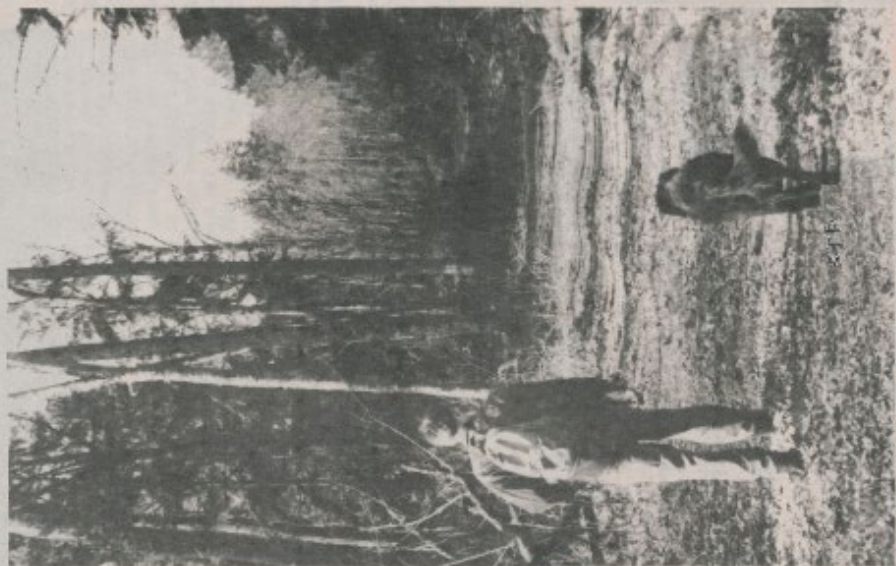
## Coal Creek Trail

One of the area's oldest rail lines, and its busiest at one time, is the Seattle and Walla Walla Railroad's line built in 1878 from Seattle to the coal-mining boom town of Newcastle on Cougar Mountain.

Today, hikers can learn something of the area's history by following the grade along Coal Creek Park near when Newcastle Road crosses Coal Creek and walk uphill. Youth groups have erected signs along the 1-1/2-mile route explaining the history of the area.

The area is laced by dozens of other trails that are less evident, but equally deserve exploration.

Bill Longwell expects rail-trails to become increasingly popular. "I think there will be more and more as grades become available," he said. "This area is one of the most active in the national rail-to-trails movement. I don't think it will



A hiker and his dog explore the abandoned Laughing Jacobs railroad

Figure 1 Issaquah Press 3/3/1993