

Sequalitchew Creek Timeline

Eons ago the sea filled an inland channel which had been carved by the ice age. The Puget Sound waters flowed into the Nisqually Reach or as the Native Americans called the Salish Sea the "Whulge".

The Sequalitchew Creek source of fresh water outlet is Sequalitchew Lake about 5 miles upstream, located inside Fort Lewis. The Creek travels through several marshy areas and patches of Prairie land. It disappears into a wooded ravine and descends a distance of 1 ½ miles and drops about 200 feet in elevation.

"Sequalitchew" has been interpreted to mean "extensive sand banks over which the water is shallow" and also "big tide" or "long run out tide" due to the fact that the sand was exposed for a great distance at low tide.

Pre 1800's – It is believed that the Sequalitchew band of the Nisqually inhabited a village nestled on a narrow terrace against a bluff a short distance inland from the mouth of Sequalitchew Creek on the south side. This winter village consisted of two long houses placed end-to-end due to space in the cove, and was home to about 40 to 50 Indian people. A salmon trap or weir was the most popular method of fishing small streams such as the Sequalitchew.

1832, Nov 30—Archibald McDonald of the Hudson Bay Company arrives and builds a 15 x 20 foot store house on the south side of the Creek which was later named Nisqually House.

1833, June – Hudson Bay Company Chief trader Francis Heron arrives by land, cuts an oxen road diagonally into the slope which led from Nisqually House on the Creek to the bluff above.

1833 – The first ship to arrive off Sequalitchew Creek is the HBC ship "Vancouver", loaded with supplies for the new fort under construction on the prairie above the Creek.

1839 – the Methodist Episcopal Mission is built and occupied from Aug 1840 to Sept 1842 by Dr John Richmond his wife America and Willson and his wife Chloe Clark.

1841 – Lt Charles Wilkes anchors the "Porpoise" and "Vincennes" at the mouth of the Creek, and builds two log structures on the southern bluff of the creek, overlooking the sound. His mission is to chart the waters of the Puget Sound for the American government. This site is now known as the "Wilkes Observatory."

1840s – Hudson Bay Company subsidiary the Puget Sound Agricultural Company has buyilt a small dam on the creek for washing their sheep.

1843 -- Fort Nisqually is moved inland beside the Creek.

1846 – Between 20 to 300 Indians camped on the north side of the Creek opposite the 1843 Ft Nisqually 2nd location.

1850 – Thomas Glasgow, a United States Customs Inspector is assigned to the “Port of Nisqually”, constructed a cabin and sawmill on the north side of the Creek. HBC considers him a squatter.

1853 – the 157.3 acre mill property is occupied by Levant F Thompson and his wife Susannah Thompson under the Donation Land Claims Act.

1855 – the Mill is burned during the Indian War and was later rebuilt and sold to Lafayette Balch. The mill operated for a period of 12 years and became known as the Sequalitchew Mill claim under a succession of owners.

1870 – Frelinghuysen Holden constructs a cabin and chicken coop halfway up the bluff beside the old Oxen Road.

1875 -- 18 acres along the bluff is sold to the Portland and Puget Sound Railway a subsidiary of Union Pacific. The railroad grade north of Sequalitchew creek was soon abandoned.

1906 – Seattle Sand and Gravel Company located on the old Mill site sells its land to the E I DuPont de Nemours Company which intents to build an explosives plant. DuPont acquires 2700 acres of land and 1485 feet of waterfront on which the company will construct its wharves.

1910 – DuPont Co builds a narrow gauge railway on the north side of the creek to its wharf. The trail you are walking on was the old rail bed.

1976 – DuPont company closes its plant and sells its land which included the Creek to the Weyerhaeuser Company.

1990- 2002 – Weyerhaeuser and the DuPont Company begin the cleanup of hazardous waste left from the explosives plant. Two large oil tanks are removed from the bed of Sequalitchew Creek, a large flat level area as the creek widens out.

1997 – Glacier Northwest starts mining gravel on the north side of the bluff.