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**HISTORIC COMMISSION**

*Creating Solutions for Our Future*

## THURSTON COUNTY HISTORIC COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

### Historic Register Application

**Public Hearing: September 9, 2020, 6:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Hearing at:**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84536493723>**

**Password: 096217**

Application No: TCHC 20-01 Yelm Cemetery

Location: 11540 Cemetery RD SE Yelm, WA 98597

Owner: Gary Sortor  
11540 Cemetery RD SE  
Yelm, WA 98597

Date Built: Mary Powell was the first to be interred in 1881, interments continue as there are available plots in the cemetery.

Staff Report Prepared By: Sonja Cady & Jeremy Davis

#### **A. Background and Historical Significance:**

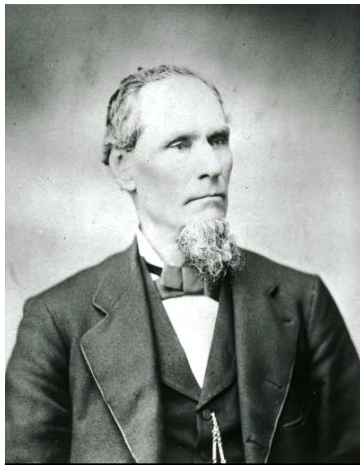
(Should address topics such as date built, notable historic dates, changes in ownership or function of building, etc.)

The Yelm Cemetery is a public cemetery located on a 9.17 acre parcel of historic significance to Thurston County. The Cemetery has at least 1,923 interments, dating back to 1881. At least 765 of the interments took place prior to 1970. New interments are continuing to take place in the cemetery.

## Some Notable Interments in the Yelm Cemetery

The information provided below is a summary of some notable persons interred in the Yelm Cemetery. It is not an exhaustive look at all those interred and their history in Thurston County and Washington State. Attachment C includes a list that was originally created by the Olympia Genealogical Society in 1982, transcribed to the internet in 1998, and last updated in 2009. A second list with pictures of headstones is from the Find A Grave internet database and has been provided electronically. The Find A Grave database indexes each grave site with a Memorial ID and may include photos of each head stone and other information about the interred.

### Longmire Family



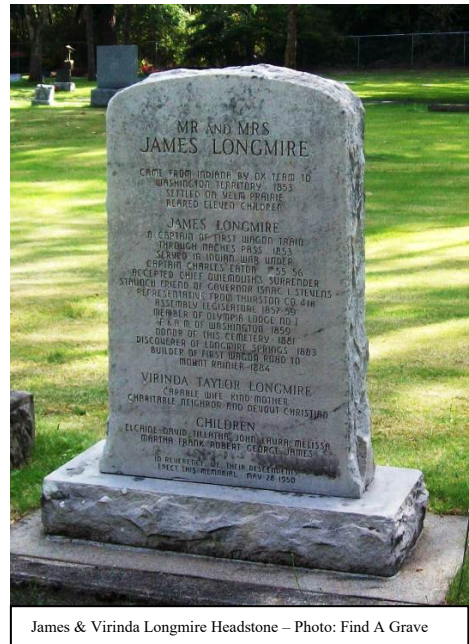
James Longmire – Photo: Find A Grave

James Longmire, settled in the Yelm Prairie when few other European families were present. He was instrumental in organizing a school system and church for the community and donated some of his land for the Yelm Cemetery. James Longmire was instrumental in the early development of Mt. Rainier, and building early roads, trails and buildings. The Longmire Hot Springs are named after him at Mt. Rainier and is the location where he died in 1897. He equipped the first ascents of Mt. Rainier and climbed the mountain at the age of 63. The Longmire Hot Springs Hotel (1890) was run by his wife and family after his death. His wife Virinda Taylor Longmire (1830-1912) pictured below is also interred with him in the Yelm Cemetery. James Longmire was born March 17, 1820 and died September 15, 1897, he and several of his family members were laid to rest in the Yelm Cemetery. Some of his descendants still call Yelm home.



Virinda Longmire – Photo: Find A Grave

His son Elcaine and grandson Ben, also interred in the cemetery, took over the hotel and other enterprises with their mother, and were widely known for their work at Longmire Medical Springs on Mt. Rainier. The trail to the springs was constructed in 1883, and the first guest cabins built around 1884. The Longmire claim became part of Mt. Rainier National Park in 1899. Robert Longmire, also interred in the cemetery, operated a saloon and pool hall at this location. Robert was once elected Sheriff of Pierce County. The complex was operated by the family until Elcaine's death in 1915, when it was leased to company.



James & Virinda Longmire Headstone – Photo: Find A Grave



**LONGMIRE, ROBERT**—Born in Thurston County on 1200-acre farm, known as the Longmire Donation Claim. James Longmire, his father, was a pioneer of this country and founder of the now famous Longmire Springs. Raised on the farm. Served as a guard at the U. S. penitentiary, being promoted from guard to jailer, then from jailer to deputy warden. Was one of the first to arrive in the noted Klondike country, where he suffered many hardships. After returning from Klondike, was appointed bailiff in the U. S. Court, where he worked up to the time of being elected Sheriff of Pierce County.

Robert Longmire Obit. – Photo: Find A Grave

The property remained the Longmire’s until 1939 when the mineral rights were finally purchased by the National Park Service. The original hotel burned down in 1910. The Longmire Historic District and area is located approximately 6.5 miles east of the Nisqually entrance and is the second most visited area in the National Park after Paradise. It is named after James Longmire. (NPLAS.ORG) James’ son David Longmire went on to be a prominent citizen of Yakima County where the Longmire family owned land. David was a party to the 1901 Longmire v. Smith Supreme Court case, which was a pivotal case on allocation of water resources in the state. (Sources: Yelm History Project, HistoryLink.org, John Caldbick, Photo: Find a Grave, B Wernex)

Thomas Pierce

Thomas Pierce was the second Yakima County Sheriff (1870-74) after Charles Splawn. Yakima was formed in 1865 in Washington Territory, and at the time included 9,200 square miles. Washington Territory at the time had the current state boundaries and included 71,362 square miles.



Thomas Pierce Headstone  
– Photo: Find A Grave

George Edwards

George Edwards was an early Hudson’s Bay Company employee who was born in England. He became an early European pioneer in Yelm first arriving in 1850 at Fort Nisqually. He came by way of the ship Norman Morrison. His wife was a Nisqually tribal member named Mary who was a niece of the Kickitat chief Owhi. He was an early farmer who received a 320-acre Donation claim from the U.S. Government on the Yelm Prairie along with John Edgar. He at one time owned much of what became the western part of the townsite for Yelm, WA developed by Ole Solberg (1923). His two-story farmhouse, destroyed by fire in 1960, stood where the Yelm McDonalds now stand. His daughter Elizabeth Lotz Treat was the second wife of David Longmire, son of James Longmire.



George Edwards Headstone – Photo: Find A Grave

B. Significant Historical Characteristics:

These are the features that contribute to the property’s historical significance which should be maintained and preserved.

- 1. 9.17 acre public Cemetery dating back to 1881
- 2. Historic Tombstones
- 3. Historic Notable Persons Interred in Cemetery

C. Qualifications for the Thurston County Historic Register:

(Must meet the qualifications in **bold lettering**)

- Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation**
- At least 50 years old (or lesser age if they are exceptionally important)**
- Has integrity of location (i.e- is in its original location)**
- Falls into one of the following categories:**

The Yelm Cemetery is eligible for nomination to the Historic Register as it appears to meet the qualifications in several categories. The Cemetery is well over 50 years old dating back to the 1800's and it has integrity of location.

1. Significance: Per Criteria #1 The Yelm Cemetery is of historic significance to Thurston County as it dates back to the 1880's.
2. Grave Sites of Significance: Per Criteria #9
  - a. James Longmire and family et al, an early settler who helped create a school, church, and public cemetery for Yelm is interred here and donated his land for the Cemetery. The Longmire area of Mt. Rainier National Park is named after James Longmire et al.
  - b. George Edwards, an early settler whose land became part of the City of Yelm.
3. Cemetery: Per Criteria #10 this is a cemetery with interments of persons of transcendent importance from age.

Some supportive documentation on the qualifications of the placement of properties to the Historic Register can be found as Attachment A and Attachment B. Attachment A is general background about the Thurston County Historic Register and the process for designation. Attachment B is section 2.106.040 of Thurston County Code pertaining to the Historic Register.

D. Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Yelm Cemetery be placed on the Thurston County Historic Register as it is of great historical significance to Thurston County and meets criteria 1,9 and 10 of the Thurston County Code section 2.106.040.

## List of Attachments

Attachment A            General Background about the Thurston County Historic Register  
Attachment B            Thurston County Code Chapter 2.106 Historic Commission

These following attachments were provided to the Historic Commission and Applicant electronically and are available online at

<https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/permitting/historic/historic-home.html>

Attachment C            US Genweb Archives list and Find A Grave list  
Attachment D            Longmire's story Crossing to Yelm  
Attachment E            Chapter 3 of the Mount Rainier National Park Nature Notes Vol.  
                                  XV June 1937 No. 2  
Attachment F            History of Yakima Valley on David Longmire



## GENERAL BACKGROUND ABOUT THURSTON COUNTY HISTORIC REGISTER

### The Process for Designating Properties to the Register

The Thurston County Preservation Ordinance (#8334) in Section 3.B describes this process as follows: Owner approval is required for designation to the register. A public hearing must be held by the Historic Commission with notice given to the public and the owner(s). Appeals to the Commission's designation decision may be made to the Board of Thurston County Commissioners within 30 days.

### Basis for Decision-Making Regarding Designation to the Register

Criteria for determining eligibility to the Thurston County Historic Register is found in Section 5A of the Thurston County Preservation Ordinance. Properties may be designated if they are:

1. At least 50 years old (or lesser age if they are exceptionally important).
2. Have integrity of location.
3. Are associated with the heritage, culture, and development of the County in at least one of several ways, such as:
  - a. Outstanding examples of earlier architectural styles or construction methods; or
  - b. Associated with important historical events or with persons significant in local history; or
  - c. Comprise a district representative of an earlier period.
  - d. Archaeological sites are also eligible.

THE FULL LIST OF DESIGNATION CRITERIA FROM ORDINANCE #8334 IS ENCLOSED ON THE ATTACHED SHEET.

### Review of Changes to Historic Register Properties

Properties designated to the Thurston County Register are subject to an advisory review process by the County's Historic Commission when any changes are proposed to exterior architectural features, identified historic interior features of public buildings, or to any proposed demolitions or new construction on the property. The purpose of the review is to try to prevent detrimental alterations to or destruction of significant historic features of the property. Standards guiding the review are the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation 1983." Copies are available at the Thurston County Planning Department.

Those features which the Historic Commission will be concerned about are listed in the staff report for each property and will become part of the official register designation action. Compliance with any advice on proposed changes to the historic property is voluntary on the part of the owner or person proposing the change. If, however, changes result in the loss of the building's historic character, the Historic Commission may remove it from the Historic Register after public hearing. The review process for proposed changes to historic properties on the Historic Register is to take no more than 30 days and is tied to application for other existing County permits.

In addition, a property tax exemption for historic renovations requires binding review and approval of the renovation before the tax exemption is granted. A separate meeting to review renovation plans must be arranged for any properties wishing to claim this exemption



Chapter 2.106 Historic Commission

Chapter 2.106.040 Thurston County historic register

- A. Criteria for Determining Designation to the Register. Any building, structure, object, site or district may be designated for inclusion in the Thurston County historic register if it has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation; has integrity of location; is at least fifty years old, or is of lesser age and has exceptional importance; and if it falls into at least **one** of the following categories:
1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state or local history;
  2. Embodies the distinctive architectural characteristics of a type, period, style or method of design or construction, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
  3. Is an outstanding work of a designer, builder or architect who has made a substantial contribution to the art;
  4. Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the county's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering or architectural history;
  5. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in national, state or local history;
  6. Has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in prehistory or history;
  7. Is a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance;
  8. Is a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event;
  9. Is a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance;
  10. Is a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events, or cultural patterns;
  11. Is a reconstructed building that has been executed in a historically accurate manner, within a suitable environment and which is congruent with the county's history;
  12. Is a creative and unique example of folk architecture and design created by persons not formally in the architectural or design professions, and which does not fit into formal architectural or historical categories.
- B. Process for Designating Properties or District to the Register.
1. Any person may nominate a building, structure, object, site or district for inclusion on the county historic register. Members of the historic commission or the commission as a whole may also generate nominations. In its designation

decision, the historic commission shall consider the county inventory of historic resources, and the county comprehensive plan and sub-area plans.

2. Applications for nominations must bear the signature of the property owner(s), or in the case of districts signatures must be obtained from the owners of a majority of the properties within the proposed district. Applications shall be on forms and include information and documentation supporting the historic significance of the building, structure, object, site or district.
3. In the case of districts, the designation shall include descriptions of the boundaries of the district; the characteristics of the district which justifies its designation; the features which contribute to the significance of the district, which may include more than one classification of significance level depending on importance of the feature, including buildings, structures, sites and objects; and finally, standards to guide review of changes to properties within the district.
4. The historic commission shall consider the merits of the nomination at a public hearing after due notice has been given to the public, to the owner(s) and lessees, if any, of the subject property, and to all abutting property owners at least ten days prior to the hearing. Such notice shall include publication in a newspaper of general circulation in Thurston County, and posting of the property. If the historic commission finds that the nominated property meets the designation criteria in subsection A of this section, the property shall be listed on the historic register and the owner(s) and lessees, if any, notified of the listing.
5. The decision of the historic commission designating objects, properties and districts to the county register may be appealed by the applicant in writing within thirty days to the board of county commissioners. The notice of appeal shall concisely specify the errors or issues for consideration by the board and shall cite any provision of law alleged to be violated. The board of Thurston County commissioners will act upon the appeal in an expeditious manner subsequent to review of the recommendation of the Thurston County historic commission.
6. Properties listed in the county historic register shall be recorded on official zoning records with an "HR" (for historic register) designation. This designation shall not change or modify the underlying zone classification.
7. Whenever applications are made for alterations, changes, construction, removal or demolitions on any properties having "HR" designations, the building or zoning official shall notify the historic commission so that the proposed change may be reviewed under the provisions of Section 2.106.050. The building or zoning official shall also notify the applicant of the special review that is required.