



Bemiss - Days of Yore

The Bemiss neighborhood is unique because of its early evolution in two cities -- Spokane and Hillyard. (The town of Hillyard was platted in 1892, incorporated as the Town of Hillyard in 1907, and annexed to the City of Spokane in 1924). By 1890, seven residential additions had been laid out in the neighborhood, including the Hays Park, Arlington Heights, and Avondale Additions. The Ross Park Street Railway trolley connected downtown Spokane Falls, southwest of the emerging neighborhood, to Crestline Street at Illinois Avenue. The trolley, powered by hydroelectricity generated by the Spokane River, was the first electric railway in the city.



From the end of the Ross Park line, the Arlington Heights Motor Railway Company constructed a line northward along Crestline Street, which operated with steam power until the line was electrified in 1891. The line's north end soon became the bustling community of Hillyard. These streetcar lines serving the neighborhood became merged into the Washington Water Power's street railway system by 1899.



In 1907, the area north and east of Rich Avenue and Crestline Street was incorporated as part of the Town of Hillyard and that same year, the City of Spokane annexed the remaining unincorporated area to the south and west.

The Hillyard school district opened a three-story public school -- containing the district's office, high school and grade school -- that stood on Regal Street, immediately northeast of the existing site of Regal Elementary School. The high school's first class, consisting of five students, graduated in 1911. After six years of sharing the building, the growing high school moved to its own building approximately one-half mile north -- also located on Regal Street. A new Regal Elementary building replaced the former structure next to this site in 1982. Community members salvaged the original building's cupola and bell and erected them as a tribute on the old school site.



Farther south, the City of Spokane acquired land for Hays Park from the Big Bend Land Company in 1907 for \$1.00. Five blocks to the southeast, a school opened on the site of Bemiss Elementary in 1909 as the Hays Park School to serve the Spokane Public School District.

A permanent building for the Hays Park School was built in 1912, which the school board renamed in 1915 for David Bemiss, an important figure at the helm of the first wave of expansion of the public school system. Bemiss, born and educated in Ontario, Canada, served ten years as



The Bemiss Neighborhood Council meets the Second Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. Meetings are held at the Northeast Community Center, 4001 N. Cook Street.

<http://bemiss.spokaneneighborhoods.org/>



Spokane's superintendent, beginning in 1889. His son, Elbert, was among the seven students in Spokane High School's first graduating class in 1891.

John R. Rogers High School was constructed in 1932 as Spokane's third high school and named for Washington's third governor, a reformer and supporter of public education. The school replaced the old Hillyard High School and was purposefully built closer to central Spokane in order to add students from additional surrounding areas. A fire in 1931 that caused heavy damage to a portion of the old school helped push its construction. The school district later expanded and modernized the structure but maintained all of the elevations built in the Art Deco style that define its original character.

Life in Bemiss - Today

Bemiss is a diverse community. Residents of all ages and family types live in Bemiss and maintain a proud recognition of the community's blue-collar workforce heritage. Housing styles of early 20th Century Craftsman for large families and smaller tidy bungalows reflect this culture. Bemiss hosts a mixture of residents who have lived their entire life in the neighborhood, and others who are relatively new. A single block is home to baby-boomer retirees and older folks, twenty-somethings with babies and toddlers, thirty-somethings with kids in school and those in their forties with high-school kids. Strong ties within the community help to ensure children have a safe place to call home. Neighbors know each other by name and give assistance when needed.



The physical neighborhood is as diverse as its people. Three major nearby businesses, Jubilant HollisterStier, Comcast, and Sonderen Packaging, provide a broad range of job types. A gridded street system and commercial arteries along Market Street and portions of Crestline Street and Euclid Avenue provide residents easy access on foot or by bus to groceries and restaurants within the neighborhood and beyond. The Hillyard Library is next door to the Northeast Community Center, which provides medical, dental, and social services, as well as the Hillyard Senior Center.



Children who live in Bemiss attend all grades at neighborhood schools and visit the neighborhood's three parks. Hays Park is an arboretum about one-quarter mile in length with a play structure and picnic tables. Courtland Park, next to Bemiss Elementary School, is a smaller park that contains a baseball field and barbecues. Andrew Rypien Field is a sports complex that hosts soccer fields, a mile-long loop walking path, and a modified baseball field for children with physical restrictions. Businesses, organizations and other community members partnered to clean up and transform the former junkyard site into the sports complex that also includes a community garden.





Bemiss - Treasures

- Rogers High School is a source of pride for the Bemiss neighborhood.
- Crowds of families pack Andrew Rypien Field to watch soccer and baseball games. The field also contains community vegetable gardens.
- Young children and their families play in Hays Park with neighbors. The park provides a defining feature with a playground and arboretum that is quiet, clean, comfortable and safe. Now a favorite destination, the Olmsted Brothers firm recommended it as a playfield site in a report to the Board of Park Commissioners in 1907.



Bemiss - Natural & Built Identity

- Views of the Spokane River valley and surrounding foothills from Illinois Avenue.
- The railroad industry’s legacy is ingrained in the community, with childhood memories of playing, watching the trains and using rail routes as shortcuts to downtown. Observers can still see trains along the local rail route leaving Hillyard.



Bemiss - Neighborhood Tales

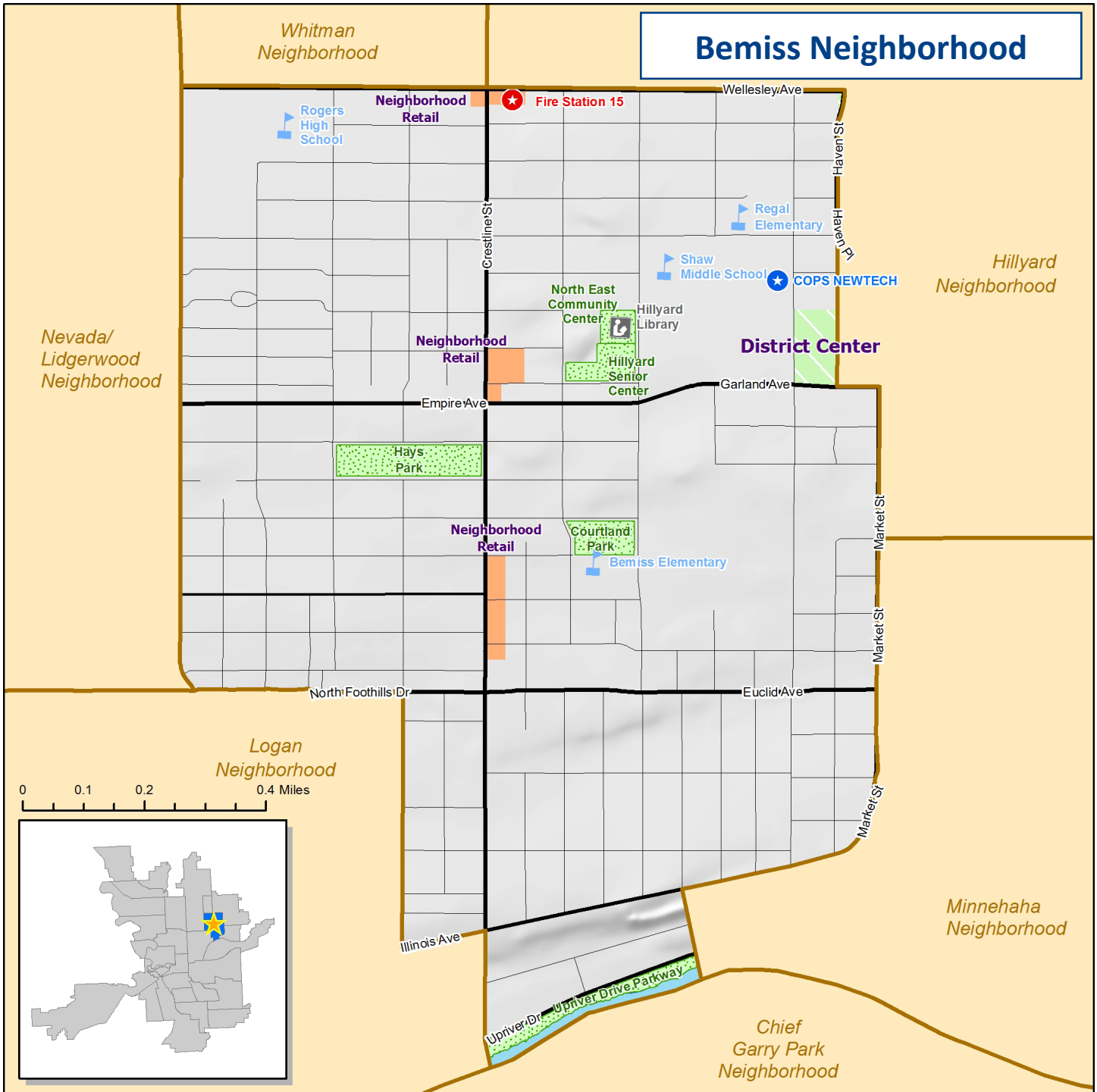
“During the winter in the 1950s and earlier, the Napa Hill was unpaved, as was Euclid at that time. The Utilities Department would close the hill from Dalton to Fairview, and provide an employee and wood to keep a fire going on the northeast corner of the two. I spent many, many, many days and evenings on the ‘Hill.’ Kids came from neighborhoods all around to slide on Napa Hill and there was never any real trouble. Some of the best times of growing up in Spokane.”

- Resident

“Derry Oil was a full service fuel station and fuel oil supplier for much of North Spokane. Directly across Fairview from Derry Oil, my grandfather worked shoveling coal in a coal yard.”

- Resident





SOURCES

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Mutschler, C.V. et al. (1987). Spokane's street railways: An illustrated history. Spokane: Inland Empire Railway Historical Society.

Emerson, S. (2010). John R. Rogers High School National Register of Historic Places nomination form.

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Lemon, J.J., ed. (1982). Pirate gold: A memory book commemorating the golden anniversary of John R. Rogers High School. Spokane Public Library, Northwest Room.

