



Hillyard - Days of Yore

As the Great Northern Railway pushed across Montana, Idaho and Washington in 1892, a spot five miles northeast of Spokane Falls was selected as the railroad's storage and staging area. It was called the Spokane Material Yard until January 1893 when James J. Hill picked it for the division point between Spokane and Kalispell. This resulted in the rapid construction of major terminal and shop facilities on the site. The Hillyard shops became the major shop facility for the western part of the Great Northern systems and the largest west of St. Paul.

In 1912, the heavy repair shop (back shop) was opened, enabling extensive rebuild work of locomotives. In 1927, the shop superintendent and foreman convinced Great Northern president Ralph Budd they could build an order for heavy freight locomotives cheaper than any of the eastern manufacturers. The shops were awarded a contract to build ten locomotives, making Hillyard the first manufacturer of large locomotives in the west and bringing a sizeable payroll increase to Spokane. The shop's 800 personnel rolled out the last R-1 class locomotive assembled here in late 1928.



The history of the town of Hillyard paralleled that of the railroad. The townsite was platted for 5,000 people on October 25, 1892 by Leland D. and Kate C. Westfall and was named in honor of James J. Hill and the Great Northern Railway's yard to which it was adjacent. Conceived as an independent town, Hillyard remained that way until 1924, although the expanding City of Spokane had incorporated the lands to the west, south and east. Hillyard became incorporated as a town in 1907, with the railroad yards and shops being carefully kept outside the town limits.

In 1929-30, the shops were given another order for a larger version of the articulated locomotive and then returned to major overhaul and repair work. As the diesel locomotives took over larger portions of the railroad's work, all steam locomotive maintenance west of Minot, North Dakota, was concentrated here until the end of the steam engine's use on the western lines in 1953.



In 1924, after a number of discussions and attempts over the years to annex to the City of Spokane, an election was held on the issue. Eight days following a popular vote of 808-681, Hillyard became part of the City of Spokane. At that time it had a population of some 4,500 people and an area of just under one square mile. After all of the transfers had been carried out, an official celebration was held on the 11th of October



to conclude the annexation process, complete with a parade, dancing, and concerts.

The old steam locomotive backshop building was remodeled into a completely modern diesel heavy repair shop which was the railroad's largest facility west of the Rockies. The new shop was formally dedicated on November 19, 1954 with a celebration of 62 years of working together between the railroad and the Hillyard community.

An annual Hillyard community celebration called the Hillyard Hijinks occurred from 1934 to 1968.

The festival ranged from one to four days and included fundraising for various neighborhood civic groups. The Hillyard Hijinks community celebration was revived in 1970 as Jim Hill Days as part of an effort to promote the Hillyard community and offset the negative impact of the pending Burlington Northern merger. It was revived again in 1978 and held regularly in the following decades with the help of area businesses, residents and service clubs.



Life in Hillyard - Today

Hillyard has an inherent identity and pride that is built on tradition, history, and place. At its core, Hillyard is a community of people living and sharing life together. Kids play in the streets, residents walk their dogs and everyone works to make Hillyard a better place. The neighborhood is family oriented, established, and in transition.

Neighbors enjoy access to parks and the pedestrian friendly nature of the physical landscape. Residents will admit the neighborhood is not perfect, but people are proud of the neighborhood's "rough edges" that keep it unique and real. It's a place that has real people with real stories and more community than any other place in the region.

The neighborhood has many dedicated and involved residents who volunteer most of their free time to a variety of organizations such as the Hillyard Neighborhood Council and Greater Hillyard Business association, to name a few. These efforts have created exciting changes over the years including a reconstructed Market Street, new business opportunities, and neighborhood revitalization. It is this strong sense of community, built on history and involvement, that attracts new residents to call Hillyard home.



People are proud of the historic homes, friendly neighbors, and the casual atmosphere. Residents enjoy a host of community events and get together for clean-up activities, children play-dates, barbeques, and many other events. A variety of people live in Hillyard including families, retirees, artists, immigrants, community-minded folks, visionaries, and professionals.



Hillyard - Treasures

- Historic Hillyard Business District
- Hillyard antique stores
- Train station
- Hillyard Skate Park
- Schools

Hillyard - Natural & Built Identity

- Hills to the east
- Plains where the wild horses used to roam
- Harmon Park
- Buddhist Temple
- The Yard
- Neighborhood Churches
- Shadow of Beacon Hill



Hillyard - Neighborhood Tales

“Hillyard is an old neighborhood that has seen its shares of up and downs. Its strength is that history and staying power and the vision of those young and old who choose to invest their lives in Hillyard.”

– Luke Tolley

Hillyard - Annual Events or Activities

- Hillyard Festival
- Hillyard Hippie Happening
- Chalk Art Walk

Hillyard Neighborhood

