Osceola Loop Heritage Corridor

Location: Southeast King County,
Enumclaw Plateau

Length: 7.2 miles

Begins: SE 448th Street, at 196th
Avenue SE

Ends: Point of beginning

Corridor follows SE 448th Street east from 196th Avenue SE; turns south at 244th Avenue SE; returns west along SE 456th Way; and turns north again on 196th Avenue SE to point of beginning.

Road history in local context

The south edge of the Enumclaw Plateau bordering on the White River is an area of very early settlement in King County. Porter's Prairie, claimed by Allen Porter in 1853, was criss-crossed with both trails and rudimentary roads that show up on GLO maps and early atlases of King County. A major route over the Cascades–the Naches Pass Highway (SR 410)– was once partly aligned along this corridor.

Newcomers to Porter's Prairie in the 1850s and '60s faced a tangle of fallen timber, ground cover, and second growth trees from forest fires. Logging was a first priority and numerous portable mills traversed the area. Porter's Prairie was renamed Osceola when a post office was established there in 1877. This no doubt encouraged the formal establishment of county roads in the area, begin-ning this same year. With very minor realignments over the years, several of them form today's Osceola Loop Heritage Corridor.
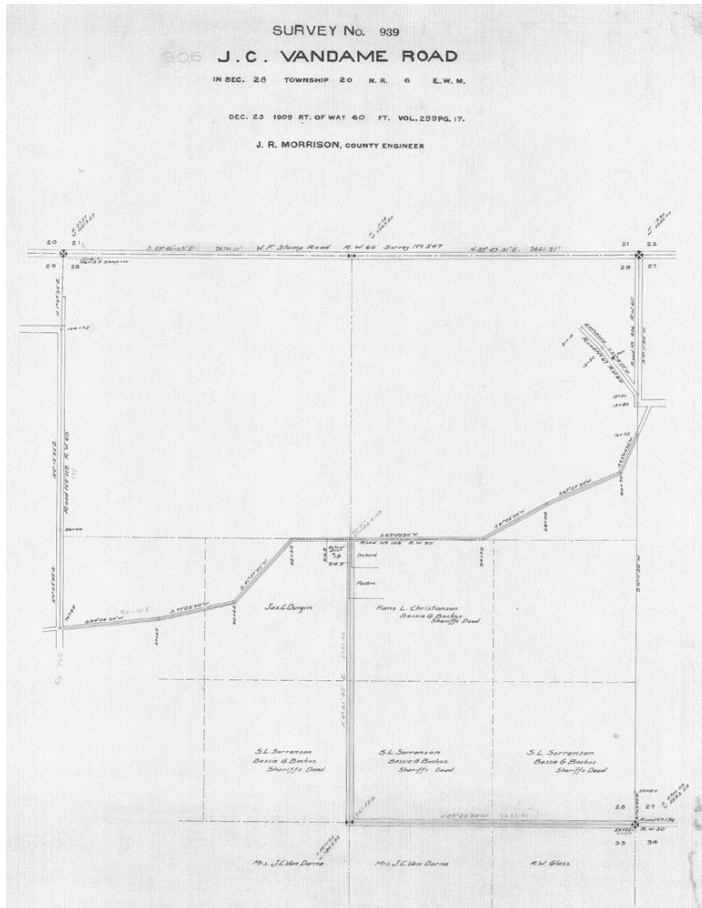
SE 456th Way is one of the earliest in the Plateau's network of community connectors. According to GLO records, a portion of it was in use as early as 1867. Local settlers George Vanderbeck, Louis Smith, and E.G. White officially petitioned for the creation of Porters Prairie Road in May of 1877. A citizen crew was chosen by the county to view, survey, and lay out this road in August of that year. The report of the viewers is colorful:

> Having first duly sworn the viewers E.G. White, L.C. Smith and Geo. Vanderbeck, and C.H. Mason, W.D. Smith Chainmen and Henry Groten and Bob Puck (Indian) and Big John (Indian) Axmen, I set a maple post marked "R" for the initial point of the Road near the N.E. corner of W.D. Smith's garden and on the west Bank of White River…

Porter's Prairie Road was subsequently extended, relocated, and vacated in various increments in 1881, 1889, and 1917. The west end of SW 456th Way is a remnant of the old Road No. 67, also known as the L.C. Smith Road.

Looking east toward 228th. Courtesy of King County Archives

SURVEY No. 939

J.C. VANDAME ROAD

IN SEC. 28 TOWNSHIP 20 N.R. 6 E.W.M.

DEC. 23 1909 RT. OF WAY 60 FT. VOL. 299 PG. 17.

J. R. MORRISON, COUNTY ENGINEER

J.C. Vandame Rd, 1909. From King County Road Services Map Vault Database; Survey Packet, No. 939

Osceola's 3rd Schoolhouse, 1914, Courtesy of Enumclaw Plateau Historical Society Museum, 2002.1.04-2

The mid-section of SE 456th Way in Section 28 came into being as the Silas Smith Road No.108, to be laid out as follows: "from Porter's Ford on White River to the School house in Section 27, Town 20 N., R. 6 E. ...dated at Slaughter Post Office, August 1883." The west end of the 456th was established as the F. Sunding Road No. 292 in 1891. By 1913, this entire southern leg of the Osceola Loop was in place in its current configuration.

During this period, the Enumclaw Plateau developed as a prime agricultural district of King County. Small, ethnic settlements across the Plateau declined in identity as Enumclaw, with the advantage of a Northern Pacific Railroad siding, grew in commercial importance. Subsistence farming gave way to hop ranching, followed by diversification in berries, vegetables, and poultry. Dairy farming predominated for nearly a century, and is still in evidence today. The 1920s, '30s and '40s were particularly stable and prosperous times for the Enumclaw Plateau and its agricultural community.

The northern leg of the Osceola Loop–SE 448th Street–took shape during this later period, and appears to have been constructed sometime between 1926 and 1936. Its primary segment on the east is the W.F. Stump Road No. 908, established 1910, and the H.C. Hansen Road No. 1062, established 1915. No road appears along here in a 1926 Metsker map, although it is important to note that not all established roads were actually constructed. The entire stretch is in place, however, and labeled as the Stump Road in a 1936 atlas of the county. Aerial photographs from 1937 show a fully developed agricultural landscape, with fenced pastures, cultivated fields, and orchards. The crossroads community of Osceola, and the still extant Osceola schoolhouse, are clearly visible.

Corridor signature

➢ Exceptional Mt. Rainier vistas
➢ Early settlement history
➢ Picturesque farmscapes

The Osceola Loop Heritage Corridor on historic Porter's Prairie includes the oldest road in the Heritage Corridor system. It also represents the best and least developed of scenic routes on the Enumclaw Plateau, with sweeping views across open dairy and horse farms toward Mt. Rainier in the distance. Two historic schools and a pickle factory mark the former agricultural crossroads of Osceola, established in 1877.

Contributing features

The following **roadway features** contribute positively to overall corridor character:
- Historic alignments, with curvilinear segments along White River
- Low roadbed profile hugging flat terrain
- Minimal roadway crown
- Narrow shoulders, with ground cover to edge of pavement
- Lack of fog lines

The following **contextual features** contribute positively to overall corridor character:
- Unobstructed vistas toward Mt. Rainier
- Flat plateau and hummock topography
- Open agricultural fields, mostly in pasture
- Tidy farmsteads marked by small stands of conifers
- Wood/wire fencing and rail fencing bordering right-of-way

Non-contributing features

The following elements visually detract from overall corridor character:
- Views toward Enumclaw of encroaching residential development
- Occasional large-scale homes with formal suburban landscaping
- Occasional unkempt properties