

## **Esterly Road**

The “Official Road Map of Thurston County, Washington” printed prior to 1959 indicates a graveled county road extended east from Zangle Road, but did not yet reach the Libby Road. However, the 1929 Metsker indicates “F. B. Rd.” intersected with the Libby Road near the current intersection.

The minutes of the Thurston County reflect the evolution of the Esterly Road construction.

1965: A work order is authorized to survey and plan the “construction and reconstruction” of the Esterly Road for one mile from Libby Road to Zangle Road.

1960: Esterly Road Contract No. 402 was completed on August 24, 1960.

1965: Old R/W for Zangle-Esterly Road is vacated. This R/W had been deeded to the County in 1938 but was not used when the new road was constructed.

The name of Esterly Road was changed to 81<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE in 1985.

## **Esterly Family**

The Esterly family has deep roots in Thurston County. Robert Griffith (R.G.) Esterly first arrived in Washington Territory in 1869 travelling on the Milwaukee Railroad from San Francisco. R. G. first settled in Tumwater in 1870 and was a machine operator. He constructed the only lumber planing mill in Tumwater. His mill, located on the railroad line at Tumwater Falls, manufactured “all kinds of dressed lumber, molds, door and window frames, doors, blinds, turnings, scroll work, etc., of superior quality”. His “spectacular” house in Tumwater was located near the waterfront below his mill and constructed of products manufactured there. R. G. Esterly (1848 - 1925) was mayor of Tumwater in 1899 and served five years on the local school board, and was at one time a Tumwater Council member. Esterly lived in Tumwater “off and on” for twelve years before moving to his property on the Libby Road.

In 1914, he photographed many local businesses and homes along with their owners. Robert Esterly’s children by his first marriage to Belle Rukin were Eugene Ray (1877 - ?), Willie Glen (1882 – 1883). Belle died in 1883. He then married Anna Brushert in 1897. They had two children, George Aldin (1900 – 1974) and Robert Claude (1907 – 1985). All were born in Washington.

According to the 1929 Metsker map, R. G. Easterly (sic) and G. A. Easterly (sic) owned separate tracts of land at the location of what is now the intersection of Libby Road and 81<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE. At one time, the various members of the Esterly family owned land from this intersection all the way to Henderson Inlet.

At least one of the original Esterly parcels is still owned by the family. The parcel located at 7812 Libby Road NE is known as the "Esterly Farm". The land has been farmed since 1930, and is now leased as an organic farm selling vegetables, flowers and herbs as well as eggs from free range hens. R. G. Esterly's great grandson Rick, lives next to the farm.

Ownership reflected through the years by the Metsker Maps at the Washington State Library:

1929: R. G. Esterly, G. A. Esterly

1962: V. J. Esterly, G. A. Esterly, C. R. Esterly, G. Esterly, Don Esterly

1973: V. J. Esterly, G. A. Esterly, C. R. Esterly, G. Esterly, Don Esterly

1985: V. J. Esterly and C. R. Esterly

## **Sources**

Charlie Roe, personal communication 2016

Rick Esterly, personal communication 2016

"Images of Tumwater" by Heather Lockman and Carla Wulfsberg with the City of Tumwater's Henderson Museum

Metsker Maps: 1929, 1962, 1973, and 1985 (Washington State Library)

Olympia Historical Society and Bigelow House ([olympiahistory.org](http://olympiahistory.org))

"So Fair a Dwelling Place" by Gordon Newell

Robert G. Griffith Family Information, [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com)