

Historical Significance

The DuPont Company had a fleet of narrow-gauge locomotives and cars to deliver materials and explosives between the old DuPont Powderworks Plant and the Puget Sound. When the DuPont Company sold the plant and surrounding property in 1977 to Weyerhaeuser, the fleet of locomotives, flat bed and boxcars were included with the sale. In the same year, the DuPont Historical Museum opened. Members began the task of retrieving artifacts and oral history to preserve DuPont's unique history. In the early 1980s, residents organized a grass roots effort to move a 1941 Plymouth 12-ton engine along with 5 other cars, which had been gifted to the City by Weyerhaeuser, to the museum. It is this particular train, which resides under the Train Canopy.

Why Trains?

The 36" gauge railway was selected by the DuPont Company to provide reliable transportation within its plant area and to the wharf on Puget Sound. Narrow gauge railways were a known reliable means of transportation, and most importantly, would provide the quality of ride required of the transport of explosives. It was much safer to transport explosives by rail or ships versus trucks or wagons going over pot-holed trails or roads. Trains from the DuPont Plant snaked their way down the steep north canyon wall of Sequelitchew Creek. The grade was steep, as the drop in elevation down to Puget Sound is approximately 300 ft.

The DuPont Plant and its fleets of trains supplied some of the largest construction projects in history including the Grand Coulee Dam, the Alaska Highway (Alcan Highway) and the Panama Canal. The plant helped meet the demands of WWI with a black powder facility and a nitrostarch factory. During WWII, the plant manufactured millions of pounds of explosives for forces in the Pacific. All of this product was transported by narrow-gauge trains down to ships at the DuPont Wharf.