

Prairie Gazette



Spring 2019 The Official Publication of the Lakewood Historical Society

Museum: 6211 Mt. Tacoma Drive SW, Lakewood WA 98499 OPEN Wed-Sat, 12 Noon-4 pm (253) 682-3480

Curtain going up!

New, Improved Museum to Debut in Landmark Theater, Restaurant

Museums have histories, too — and January 22, 2019 saw the beginning of what could be the most exciting chapter yet in the ongoing story of your Lakewood Historical Society.

As the hands of the clock in the Lakewood Theater's elegant old tower inched toward noon on the 22nd, LHS President **Sue Scott**, accompanied by Vice-President **Ed Voie**, Treasurer **Jim Curley** and LHS Board Members **Kris Kauffman**, **Phil Raschke**, **Jim Schell** and



Bob Jones presents key and Certificate of Occupancy to the museum's new home to LHS President Sue Scott.

Glen Spieth, accepted the key and Certificate of Occupancy to the Lakewood History Museum's future home from Mr. **Bob Jones**, Property Manager of Gramor Development WA LLC, the owners of Lakewood Colonial Center.

In distance, the upcoming move is more a baby step than a giant leap—after all, the Museum has occupied a small storefront on the Colonial

Remnant of better times. Forgotten for decades now, this sign still hangs by a side entrance to the Terrace.



and where we're talking about. If not, we'll spell it out: we're moving into a space that once held not one, but *two* beloved institutions from our

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First (1937) & last (1984) movies shown at Lakewood Theater.

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Center's south side since 2006. In terms of potential, however, the move is HUGE!

To begin with, local history of a very special sort permeates the very brick and mortar of our new location. The past has many a somber episode, of course, but our new space echoes with fun times and fond memories. After all, who doesn't love a night out—say, dinner at the finest restaurant in town, followed by a movie at a classy but comfortable little theater nearby?

Nearby—how about next door?

If you're a Lakewoodian of a certain age, you've probably figured out by now what



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PRAIRIE GAZETTE

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MEETINGS

The Lakewood Historical Society formed in 1998 to preserve and share Lakewood's rich history through programs, displays and publications. The Society offers frequent programs on topics of historical interest. Most programs are free and open to the public. Visit us on Facebook or our website for information on events and activities:

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

President's Message

Hello Everyone. Looks like spring has finally arrived! I want to thank all of you who have renewed their Lakewood Historical Society 2019 membership—still plenty of time to send in yours. And thanks to those who donate a little extra with their membership, every dollar helps us achieve our goal of moving to the new museum space.



Sue Scott

The Board of Directors accepted the Certificate of Occupancy and keys to our new museum space recently—now comes the moving part! We will keep you informed as things progress.

Lots of community outreach this summer in Lakewood. The **Farmer's Market** opens **June 4** and the Historical Society will have a booth there and also **July 23** and **August 20**. Stop by and visit our volunteers. Then **Lakewood SummerFest** at Fort Steilacoom Park on **July 13**. And there will be a **summer concert series** at the Fort Steilacoom Park Pavilion on Thursday evenings from **July 18** thru **August 29** from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

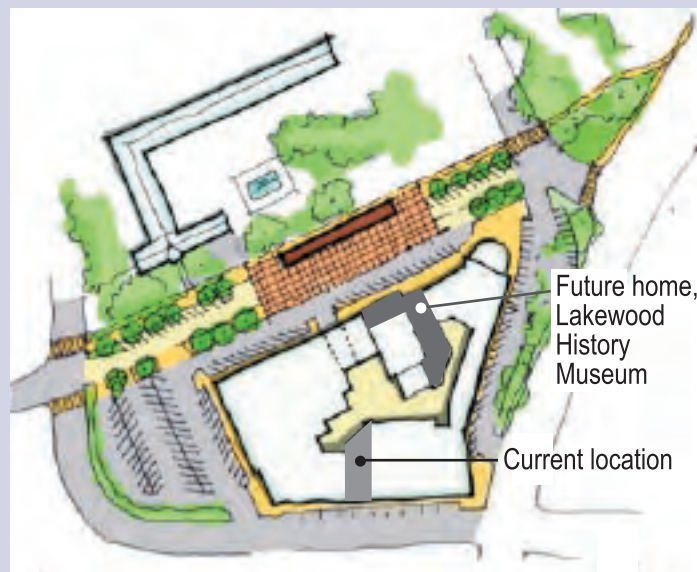
We are also working with **Historic Fort Steilacoom, Steilacoom Museum Association, DuPont Historical Society, the Fort Lewis Military Museum, and Lakewold Gardens** to produce a map and information about this historic area.

And I would like to welcome our newest Board member: **Suzanne Merriam**, a Lakewood resident since 1992. We still have a few openings on the Board, so if you are interested please contact me at 253.588.6354. Or if you have a few hours a month to docent, let me know. Thanks for your continued support.

So, besides the museum...

In the planning stages since 2016, work begins in earnest this summer on **Colonial Center Plaza**, a \$2.12 million project aimed at transforming a once-thriving but now somewhat neglected corner of the city into, among other things, "the hub of Lakewood's cultural activity."

According to the city's website, by constructing "public space elements as well as curb



MOVE from page 1

city's past—the Terrace Restaurant and the Lakewood Theater.

The Terrace: for decades, *the* place in Lakewood—literally, the *only* place—to take friends, relatives or clients you wanted to impress. Or for a romantic tete-a-tete with that special someone. Or to just fill up on the finest grub between Olympia and Tacoma.

The Lakewood Theater: long-time residents from DuPont to South Tacoma will be flooded with memories at the mere mention of its (admittedly not very imaginative) name.

Like the rest of historic Colonial Center—first suburban shopping center west of the Mississippi—the Lakewood met with great acclaim upon its opening in 1937. Its striking architecture made it an instant icon, a much-needed symbol for the sprawling Lakes District. And, like the Terrace, the theater offered something—movies—you'd otherwise have to drive miles to get. Then the population grew and other, newer movie houses sprang up, adding competition to the usual litany of woes—the rise of TV, the fall of the studio system—that eventually felled most neighborhood cinemas. Sadly, the Lakewood was no exception.

By the late seventies, the projector was definitely dimming, the popcorn going stale. Closing and reopening its doors in its final years in attempts to re-invent itself as an art or revival house, the Lakewood Theater gave up the ghost for good June 1, 1984. Since then, the old house has sat vacant and abandoned.

But not for much longer!

No mistake, much needs to be done between now and the grand opening. Many things remain that made perfect sense in a restaurant, but in a museum—not so much. Rooting out those old fixtures will be the easy part, too. Maybe the only thing greater than the acquisition of this grand new space will be the effort and resources required to make best use of it.

We'll be counting more than ever, therefore, on the support of both our members and the community at large as we tackle this, the biggest, most challenging—and most promising—project LHS has ever undertaken.

To see how you can help or to share your ideas drop by our current location (6211 Mt. Tacoma Drive SW), call us at **253-682-3480** or email contact@lakewoodhistorical.org.

...what else is coming to Motor Ave?

and gutter, sidewalk, on-street parking, street lighting, landscaping and bench seating...higher quality, denser urban redevelopment is expected within the District,



noticeably increasing social, cultural, and commercial activity. Streetscape and other urban design improvements will make this area more accessible and inviting to pedestrians."

How inviting? One early proposal called for a pedestrian-only Plaza. The approved plan, however, will still allow vehicles to pass through the Motor Ave corridor between Whitman Ave SW and the intersection of Gravelly Lake Drive SW—they just need to watch out for all that new foot traffic!



Did we mention there's a bit of work to be done? "I'd like to buy a vowel, Pat...in fact, make that two...no, *three* vowels...and a C. And an S. And..."



Right: LHS officers (guide to who's who in caption at lower right) and Property Manager **Bob Jones** display future floor plan of the Lakewood History Museum.



No mention of Colonial Center is complete without a shout-out to the man behind it: local businessman and "Father of Lakewood," the late **Norton Clapp**. He'd surely be delighted to see so much activity returning to what he envisioned as the commercial and cultural heart of Lakewood—the community he loved so well.



Left: LHS officers (by seat number). Board Members **Kris Kauffman** (1), **Phil Raschke** (2), **Jim Schell** (3), **Glen Spieth** (5); President **Sue Scott** (4); Vice-President **Ed Voie** (6); standing: Treasurer **Jim Curley**
Above: Soaking up the lingering ambiance of Lakewood's classiest eatery. The bar seating, left, will have to go—but we gotta keep those chandeliers!



"Step right in, folks—the show's starting soon."

The Bushido Code

- Samurai way of life, loosely analogous to the concept of chivalry in Europe.
- The "Samurai Way" originates from moral values ... a combination of sincerity, frugality, loyalty, martial arts, and honour until death. Born from Neo-Confucianism in Edo period 1603 - 1868 (Meiji)

A Closer Look at a Controversial Episode in American History



On February 19th at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Lakewood, LHS Board Member **Phil Raschke** held a large audience rapt as he shared little-known episodes, local angles and

abandon homes, businesses, vehicles... Worse, what they left behind often fell prey to the greedy and unscrupulous—bought at bargain rates and lost forever to the rightful owners.

There were a few bright spots. Locally, the citizens of Fife (known then as Gardenville) raised enough money to save the Mizukami family farm, keeping it well-maintained and ready for the family to pick up where they left off. A few years after their return, a member of the Mizukami family was elected Fife's second mayor.

Presentation over, Phil showed "All We Could Carry", an award-winning documentary filmed at Wyoming's Heart Mountain internment center.

Finally, **Fujiko Tamura Gardner**—like the Mizukamis, a resident of Gardenville when the war began—told of her life as a young girl in an internment camp. Her living history provided a memorable and affecting end to an informative and thought-provoking evening.



Once more, trusty pointer in hand, our Mr Raschke made it clear how well he deserves the nickname "Historical Phil"

new perspectives on the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. Fittingly, it was the 77th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, President Roosevelt's directive resulting in the evacuation of residents of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast.

A point Phil repeatedly emphasized: we can't fully understand history if we judge events of the past using only the standards of our time. Looking back more than seventy-five years later, it's easy to condemn the wholesale incarceration of *any* ethnic population—but had we been there at the time, living in an age when ethnocentrism was a far more "respectable" doctrine than it is today, accepted even by many in the media, academia and politics, and in a nation still reeling from a devastating and unprovoked attack—can we be entirely certain we wouldn't have been swept up in the "hysteria"?

That said, no one can deny the blatant injustice of suddenly uprooting tens of thousands of people, the majority of them full-fledged American citizens, with so little warning they were forced to

Historical Markers of Lakewood: First in a Series

For those who know where to look, Lakewood is positively peppered with markers commemorating historic people, places and events.

While it's a safe bet the vast majority have been placed by LHS—after all, your Society has been at it for nearly twenty years now—it's difficult to say for sure since no one has yet published a complete inventory. We hope to change that by the end of this series as we attempt to track down and catalog each and every marker, regardless of its provenance.

We start with a marker of special significance to the Lakewood Historical Society, commemorating as it does both the current and future home of our museum: the **Lakewood Colonial Center**. Located in the northeast corner of the complex, near the intersection of Motor Avenue and Gravelly Lake Drive, the marker's plaque features an aerial photo of the Center taken soon after its opening in 1937 and text that reads as follows:

LAKESWOOD COLONIAL CENTER

When the Lakewood Colonial Center was built in 1937, it was known as the Lakewood Community Center and represented a new way of life for the Lakes District and the American people. It was developed on this site, a sparsely settled



section of prairie land at the time, by Norton Clapp and the Lakewood Development Company. It was the first suburban shopping center west of the Mississippi.

The original Colonial Center included a theater, grocery store, pharmacy, dental office and other shops. An additional section with 11 stores was added to the central core in 1951. The final complex with 14 more stores was added in 1955 on the north side of Gravelly Lake Drive. By 1962 there were 32 stores and services in the greater Lakewood Colonial Center.



Final event celebrating the Museum's 10th anniversary in 2016—dedication of the Lakewood Colonial Center marker.

Recent Donors to LHS

Joan Shalikhavili
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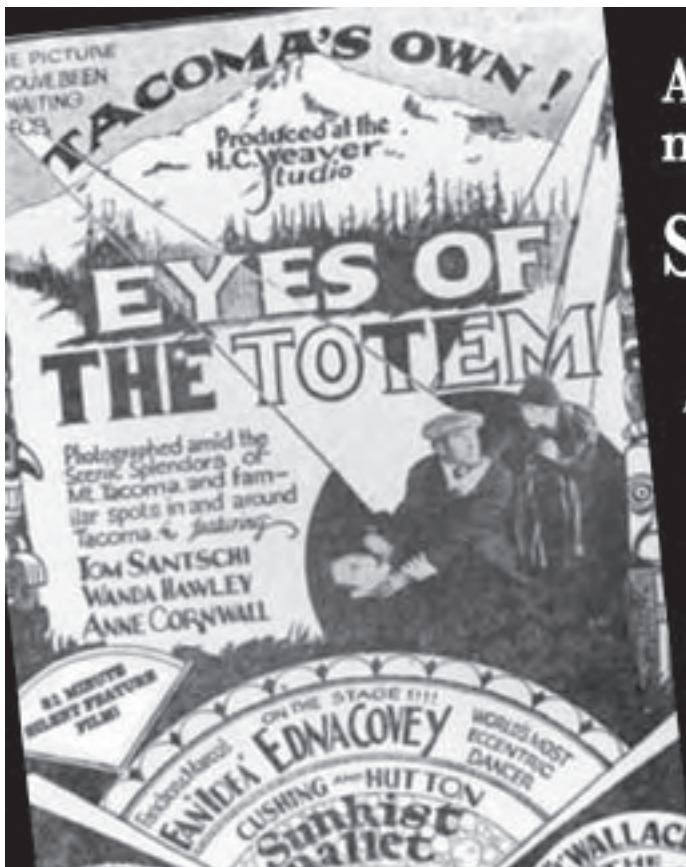
New Member

Ron Meline



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Check www.lakewoodhistorical.org for notices about more upcoming programs.