



# Prairie Gazette

Fall 2022

Official Publication, Lakewood Historical Society



## Sixty years later, it still defines Seattle to the world, but...

...if it hadn't been for a certain Lakewood businessman, the Space Needle might never have made it off the drawing board!

by Chuck Mathias

**1962-2022** There's no denying some years have a special, historic significance, ushering in changes so profound they divide the time before from the time after. Sometimes these changes affect a city, sometimes a region, sometimes an entire nation.

And some years are so significant they wind up impacting all three.

The second year of the tumultuous nineteen-sixties was definitely one of those. Consider...

**The nation**—shaken to the core by the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962.

**The region**—the Pacific Northwest endures the Columbus Day storm, a typhoon so powerful and destructive it still holds the record

See *NEEDLE*, pg 3



*Deluxe hard-cover World's Fair program embossed with the name of the author's late father-in-law, journalist Jack Wilkins, a gift in recognition of Jack's work on the fair's publicity team. And yes—he got to meet Elvis!*

*Left: Seattle architect Victor Steinbrueck's early rendering of a tower with revolving restaurant atop, a structure first proposed by local hotelier and indefatigable world's fair promoter Eddie Carlson. The sketch is surprisingly close to the finished product.*

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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

*Sue Scott* What a summer!

The four "street festival" events hosted by the City of Lakewood brought in over 250 visitors to the museum. And then SummerFest in July – we saw over 250 people at our booth, and 42 people entered a contest to win an "Ivan" tee shirt. The lucky winner was **Doraine Foster**.

Still looking for a few good docents—interested? And also searching for a few more Board members to continue to guide the museum.

Working with our museum consultant to update and refresh our exhibits.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the **Annual Meeting on Tuesday, November 15**. Doors will open at 6 p.m. followed by a short meeting at 6:30 and a program beginning at 7 p.m.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Fall—*time to get a pumpkin spice latte!*

# WE NEED YOU

## TO BE A MUSEUM DOCENT!

Do you like history, people, and bringing them together? Lately, your museum has had to limit the hours and days it's open due to a severe and ongoing shortage of docents. No experience necessary, we'll show you the ropes. Call **Sue Scott, 253-588-6354**



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If you are an Amazon shopper, set up **amazonsmile** and make us your **charity of choice**. Please be sure to designate your choice as Lakewood Historical Society **Washington** because yes, there are a few other Lakewood Historical Societies in the USA. We receive a small percentage of your purchase price at NO extra charge to you.

NEEDLE, from pg 1

as the most severe non-tropical windstorm ever to hit North America—also October, 1962.

**The city**—In 1961, Seattle is at best a remote backwater in the eyes of the world. One year later, Seattle is renowned for successfully hosting the exciting, sophisticated, well-attended, even profitable—an almost unheard of result in the history of world's fairs—**Century 21 Exposition**.

Locally, the fair has been the gift that keeps on giving. The grounds and the attractions built on it—the Science Center, Food Circus, Washington State Coliseum (now Key Arena)—have become a true civic center and a reliable magnet for the tourist trade. And then, of course, there's...

**The Needle**. Conceived as a doodle on a cocktail napkin by hotel executive **Eddie Carlson** in 1959 (inspired by a television tower with a restaurant on top he'd seen in Stuttgart, Germany), the structure that came to represent an entire city was given its svelte and distinctive form by architects **John Graham Jr., Victor Steinbrueck** (see sketch on front page), and **John Ridley**.

Convinced he had the key ingredient for a successful world's fair—an attention-grabber along the lines of the Paris exposition's Eiffel Tower—Carlson was stunned when King County refused to fund the project.

Turning his legendary charm up to the max, Carlson quickly persuaded five private investors to fund the project: **Bagley Wright, Ned Skinner, John Graham Jr., Howard S. Wright**, and, of particular interest to our story, **Norton Clapp**, president of the Weyerhaeuser Company and a man often described as the **Father**



Norton Clapp, 1906-1991

**of Lakewood**, thanks to his creation of Lakewood Center and his many other civic contributions.

There were hurdles yet to overcome—the whole project was nearly abandoned when it looked like land for a privately financed

structure within a publicly-funded enterprise was nowhere to be found. At the last minute, a 120-by-120-foot lot on the site of an old fire station was found and sold to investors for \$75,000 in 1961, just 13 months before the opening of the World's Fair.

Despite all obstacles, however, the Needle went up in record time, thanks to the money and backing of Clapp and his fellow movers and shakers. Their Needle, designated a national historical landmark in 1999, remains in private hands to this day.

In the words of **Cassandra Tate**, from her article on historylink.org,

Clapp was proud of his association with the structure, although he sometimes grumbled that every time any one had a bad meal in the revolving restaurant on the top, he heard about it.



*Speaking of Elvis, the author's father-in-law wasn't the only Lakewoodian who got to meet him. Long-time friend of LHS (and former board member) **Barbara Scott** was working in a ticket booth at the Fair when the always-polite King stopped and said a few words to her.*

In recognition of the role he played in making the Century 21 Exposition a reality—and his position as head of the northwest's largest timber company—Clapp was invited to contribute an article to the Official Souvenir Program seen on our front page. Interestingly, his is the only credited article—apart from the one entitled “The Wonderful Life of the Eye”, expounding on the great art from around the world gathered for display at the fair and written by someone well-regarded as an art connoisseur in his day, but perhaps better known for his other “roles” today—**Vincent Price**.

Given its appearance under the heading “The World of Commerce and Industry” and subject matter, it's perhaps not surprising one might find it hard to call the prose riveting, but here, in the name of historic thoroughness, is the entire article.

# Research is the real story

by Norton Clapp  
President, Weyerhaeuser Co.

**Research, the key to past discoveries that produced the wonderful world of today, is now unlocking the doors to an even brighter and more promising tomorrow.**

Those of us who have lived our lives in the world's most industrialized nation have come to regard such things as vast production lines, crucibles pouring out hot metal, whirring millsaws, and the march of power lines across the countryside as the symbols of industry progress. Yet when we pause to consider that in a decade an appreciable portion of our national production will consist of products not now in existence, we come to realize the importance of or the quiet, steady contributions that research is making to our modern way of life.

Business is entitled to great credit for bringing research to its new statur of importancue. Many marvelous applications of industrial research, things that just yesterday were considered unbelievable, are all about us at the Seattle World's Fair. These exhibits make it evident that nearly all modern enterprise relies heavily on research.

Industry very deliberately invests a sizeable part of its current earnings in research today in order to assure a bright economic future tomorrow. Indeed the pace of progress is so rapid that by failure to invest in research today, a company can quickly place itself far behind its competitors and be unable to cope with the demands of the marketplace.

In the last decade, emphasis on research, as evidenced by spending, has increased fourfold. If the trend continues, it will double again in a very short period. Some of the achievements of industrial research which the fairgoer may glimpse give tangible evidence of what has taken place, while others give a graphic impression of what still lies ahead. Not only will research provide new and improved products for the individual, but by the turn of the next century it will produce profound changes in the nation's com-

merce and industry. Men will control the complex processes, while machines will take over the heavier and the more routine tasks. Electronics will continue to reduce man's drudgery, granting him the freedom to contribute to the world's progress in other ways.

Faced with the demands of a burgeoning population, industry will turn to many remote areas and even to the sea for new sources of raw material. Mineshafts will be driven into the ocean's floor. Crops of the land and of the water will be cultivated scientifically for both food and industrial purposes. Much of today's waste will be converted into useful products.

The executive's desk will be a virtual communications center, featuring radio and two-way television contact with any spot in the world. Complex computers will help him analyze data, while business records will be flashed upon a screen at a moment's notice. [Credit where credit's due—Mr. Clapp comes pretty close to predicting the personal computer here.]

The new world of tomorrow, however, will never meet its promises without the constant development of its most important component—man[\*]. Machines may do many things, but man's[\*] individual initiative, imagination and creativity will be needed as never before to create an even better tomorrow. And tomorrow's man[\*] must develop himself so that he[\*] can live in tomorrow's world, and so that he[\*] can continue to improve it.

Here at the Seattle World's Fair we see the beginning of many of tomorrow's great advances. The magic key of research has just begun to open the way to that future—a bright one in which all mankind can share. While these predictions of things to come may seem both fantastic and impossible, yet they certainly will not be less spectacular than the progress that has taken place since a half-century ago.

[\*Sorry, ladies, but this **is** the sixties, after all!]



*Norton Clapp's article as it appears in the World's Fair Official Program*

# LHM Invited to DuPont Historical Museum's "Angus McDonald – Fort Nisqually" Presentation.

by Phil Raschke

On August 4th, the DuPont Historical Museum hosted author and Fort Nisqually historian **Steve Anderson** for an informative presentation related to his book titled "Angus McDonald of the Great Divide. The Uncommon Life of a Fur Trader 1816 -1889".

Members of the Lakewood History Museum joined an audience of 30 history lovers to hear Steve tell the amazing story of McDonald's journey from eastern Washington to the Hudson Bay Company operations at Fort Nisqually. While McDonald was a colorful character full of frontier tales, he was also a shrewd businessman. His journey from eastern Washington included a caravan of over 200 horses, 36 men, needed supplies plus a precious cargo of tightly packed furs destined for ships



*L to R, DuPont City Councilmember Penny Coffey, Author Steve Anderson, museum volunteer Lee McDonald (holding picture of Angus McDonald—no relation) and Carol Estep, Treasurer of the DuPont Historical Society.*

headed to England and Europe.

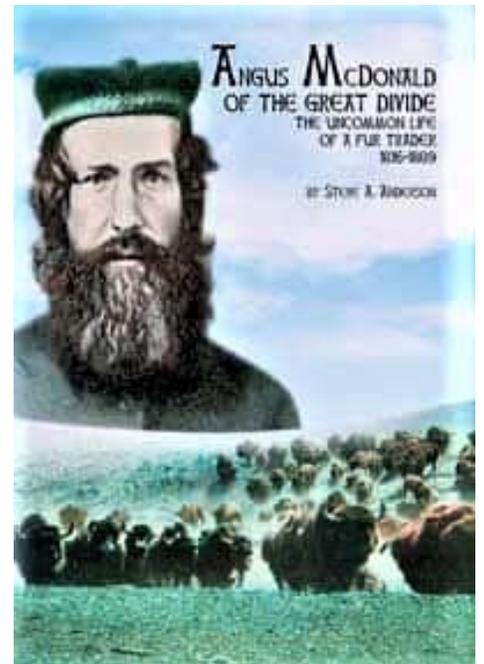
"Angus McDonald and the Great Divide" is Anderson's latest book about our famous Fort Nisqually which originally stood near the banks of the Sequilitchew Creek as it flowed into south Puget Sound. Anderson is currently working on a new book related to Fort Nisqually's trading contracts and "over the counter" negotiations with local natives.

Following Anderson's presentation, the audience was treated to an

advance look at the museum's new 9th Cavalry interpretive sign being readied for placement near the banks of the Sequilitchew near Center Street. The 9th Cavalry was a "Buffalo Soldier" unit that was encamped near the creek during the large scale Army -National Guard maneuvers of 1904.



*Left: Lee McDonald (L) and Carol Estep (R) holding new "Buffalo Soldier" interpretive sign. Right: Cover of Steve Anderson's latest book.*



# Lakewood's Summer of Street Fairs wraps up with "Fiesta de la Familia"

Saturday, September 17 was the perfect late-summer's day for the last of 2022's four street fairs, sponsored by the City of Lakewood and held on Colonial Plaza—home to your museum.





# Charles ‘Chuck’ Croasdill: Beloved, caring father and teacher

by Tim Marsh

It’s been more than 55 years since **Nora McNerthney John** was a Lakes High School student. She has never forgotten her favorite teacher at the school: **Charles Croasdill**.

He taught her journalism classes and was adviser of the ‘Lakes Ledger’ student newspaper, of which she was co-editor.

“Mr. Croasdill’s dedication to teaching and his interest and respect for his students was genuine,” said Nora, who lives in Marysville.

“He gave me and other students opportunities to expand and test our self-confidence and knowledge and was a mentor in a quiet way. He was the only teacher who I felt cared about their students as people and wanted us to succeed. Mr. C’s Journalism classes and his guidance for our ‘Ledger’ staff was a big bright spot in my high school memory.”

Croasdill came to the Clover Park School District in 1955, initially teaching at Clover Park High and advising ‘Clover Leaves’, the student newspaper.

In 1963, while continuing at Clover Park High, he added teaching at new—it opened in 1962—Lakes High where, as Nora said above, he advised the student paper. During his time teaching at both schools, the Clover Park and Lakes newspapers had one combined issue a school year focusing on a single topic.

In at least one school year, he was adviser for both Clover Park’s Klahowya yearbook and to the Clover Park and Lakes chapters of Quill and Scroll, an international high school journalism honor society.

After 23 years in the district he retired in 1978—but there was more teaching ahead.

“Dad’s motivation in teaching was to prepare his students for the next phase in their lives,” said his daughter, **Helen Croasdill Montfort** of Jacksonville, Florida. “He genuinely loved teaching. He enjoyed working at both schools.”

Daughter **Carolyn “Lyn” Croasdill Hill** of Olympia agrees. “He loved his job as a teacher and always hoped to make an impact on his students.”

“There was a time in dad’s life as a teacher that few people know about,” said Helen. In the 1960s—when he was teaching at both Lakes and Clover Park—he and another teacher taught night classes to inmates at McNeil Island Penitentiary. After school they would take the prison boat from Steilacoom to the island, returning home around 9 o’clock in the evening. Their



*Chuck started as a teacher and student newspaper advisor at Clover Park High School in 1955.*

teaching enabled the inmates to graduate from high school or earn their GED.

“Chuck”—the name he preferred—was born in Seattle on Jan. 1, 1917. He graduated in 1935 from Roosevelt High School where he competed in track and field and cross-country. His activities included being an editor of “The Roosevelt News” student newspaper.

Entering the University of Washington, he proved athletic and extremely competitive, lettering in both cross-country and as a miler and half-miler for the UW Husky track and field team—of which he became team captain. And he played varsity tennis, too!

The 1938 UW ‘Tyee’ yearbook said Chuck’s 3.9 grade point average as a junior helped raise his entire Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity house’s grade average.

After graduating in June 1940 with a bachelor of arts degree in education, he taught at Columbia Union High School in the eastern Washington town of Wapato near the Oregon border. That ended when he joined the U. S. Army during World War II.

The army sent Private Croasdill to the Aleutian Islands where he trained as a radio operator with the Alaska Communication System. According to Helen, “There was a very small base and because of the brutal weather, not much to do. The Army supplied the men with cigarettes and playing cards.” (Playing

cards came in handy in the Croasdill Lakewood home too. Chuck held “legendary” monthly poker games with friends, including his teaching colleagues).

Traveling home by train while on furlough, he met **Ruth Evelyn Matheson**, a Canadian living in Vancouver, British Columbia. Discharged from the army at Fort Lewis, Washington in November 1945, Chuck married Ruth on April 12, 1946. In 1951 she became a U.S. citizen.

Moving to Aberdeen in southwestern Washington, Chuck worked there for nine years, first for Grays Harbor College, then for Aberdeen’s Weatherwax High School. At the college, he served as adviser of the ‘Timber Line’ student newspaper. At the high school, he taught English and journalism and was adviser of the ‘Ocean Breeze’ student newspaper.

In 1955 the Croasdills moved to Lakewood and to duties in the Clover Park School District. They became Little Church on the Prairie members. All three Croasdill children—Helen, Carolyn and Charles—were born in Aberdeen, but graduated from Lakes High—Helen in 1966, Lyn in 1968 and Charlie in 1970. None had their father as a

teacher.

During three consecutive summers in the early 1960s, the Croasdill family lived in Provo, Utah where Chuck attended and taught journalism classes at Brigham Young University. He was among a select number of high school journalism teachers from across the nation awarded fellowships from The Newspaper Fund, a program made possible by grants from the *Wall Street Journal*.

The fellowships were designed to “encourage more talented young people to choose journalism as a career by assisting high school newspaper advisers and journalism teachers”, according to an Associated Press story in May 1960.

Following his retirement from the Clover Park School District, Chuck taught English from 1979 to 1986 at Fort Steilacoom Community College (now Pierce College)

After his second retirement in 1986, he and Ruth enjoyed traveling. “They had a small motor home. For the winter they would drive it from Lakewood to Florida where my husband and I and our children lived,” said Helen. “They would park it in our yard and spend time with us. My sons had lots of help with their English homework!”

Chuck and Ruth’s wanderlust went beyond the United States. “They weren’t afraid to go anywhere. One time they took a three-month trip on a freighter. They got off the ship at each port. The ship only took a small number of passengers so this was a special adventure,” Helen said.

“My parents were very devoted to each other and both worked very hard to provide for our family. I appreciated that we always sat at the table together for dinner and talked about how our day went. My dad always had something interesting to say,” said Lyn.

“Dad had a really great sense of humor and always provided some laughs. We spent summers camping and visiting national parks and I have always treasured those memories. My four children cherished them both as grandparents.”

“Our father was an active and involved sports fan,” said Charlie of



Chuck taught journalism and advised the student newspaper at Lakes High School in the late 1960s.

Tacoma. “He really enjoyed playing golf and bowling, including with fellow teachers. He was also an expert at solving crossword puzzles.

“Not only was he a collegiate athlete in two sports, he continued his love of sport as an adult. He was an avid spectator and participant. I have fond memories of him teaching me and my sisters to play golf and tennis and there was the ever present badminton court in the backyard. It was ‘lined’ just like grass football fields. It was the site of many hotly contested games and great memories.

“He would watch any sporting event on television and was always organizing betting pools with friends. I remember as a young boy being fully engaged as he told me, ‘Charlie, do not ever bet on a baseball game without knowing both pitchers.’” Sage advice!

His love of sports also manifested in another way. At Clover Park he was the public address voice for boys’ basketball games and radio play-by-play announcer for football games. Recalls Charlie, “I always thought it was an adventure to get to ac-



*Enjoying all sports—Chuck was radio play-by-play voice at Clover Park High School football games on Thompson Field in Lakewood.*

company my dad when he would announce the football or basketball games at Clover Park High School.

“The football games were the best as we would have to traverse a scary wooden catwalk to the announcer’s booth at the top of the old Thompson Field stadium. I would use binoculars and be his ‘spotter’, while eating free hotdogs. He would have coffee and a cigarette going. He was in his element calling the game

into a big old microphone.

“It is perfect that his birthday was January first. He would spend the day watching every football bowl game on television, all day long. It was always the best birthday gift ever, for our dad, the sports fan.”

At Chuck’s death in 1997 his survivors included Ruth, his wife of 51 years; daughters Helen Montfort (Ed), Carolyn “Lyn” Hill (Rick), son Charles “Charlie” Croasdill (Kristine); sister Kit Hall; brother Walter Croasdill; six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



## ***NEW MEMBERS***

Jerry & Mary Anne Woodard  
Lynda Jackson  
Nora John

## ***RECENT DONORS***

Kate Read  
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Tim Marsh  
Kyle & Gayle Hampton Smith



# Western State Hospital Historical Cemetery

## Historical Markers of Lakewood: 16th in a Series



Thanks to the efforts of **The Grave Concerns Association** and other dedicated members of the community, those interred in a once-forgotten resting place (your editor remembers being in a field in the early days of Ft. Steilacoom Park, noticing he was surrounded by hundreds of regularly spaced and identically sized indentations and only then realizing what he'd been walking over) are gaining a modicum of recognition and respect.

A fence and signage have been installed, regular maintenance begun, and, most importantly, an overwhelming task taken on: to replace the number on every headstone—the only identifier given the otherwise anonymous deceased back in the day—with a name. Again, thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers, scouring through whatever records are available, progress—slow, but steady—is ongoing.

Some remarkable discoveries have been made, among them a patient who'd been in the World Series and several veterans of the Civil War. In the case of the latter, each new discovery is followed with a public ceremony by local Civil War reenactors, featuring speeches by various dignitaries, the unveiling of the new headstone, the laying of a wreath and a salute by volley fire. To the left, photos of one such ceremony from 2017.



*Top: Stone pyramid built by WSH patients long ago, now a unique holder for a Historical Society plaque.  
Middle: Firing a volley in honor of a fallen soldier.  
Bottom: Commander Mark Stevens salutes recently recognized resting place of a Civil War veteran.*

### ON THIS SITE STANDS **WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL HISTORICAL CEMETERY** 1876-1953

Over 3,200 psychiatric patients from Western State Hospital were buried here from 1876 to 1953. Since then, burial has been elsewhere. The graves are marked with numbers for privacy reasons and the stigma of mental illness. These people worked on the award-winning hospital farm and in other hospital areas and called the hospital "home." They were mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, children and many were veterans.

May they rest in peace, with dignity and respect.

Dedicated to their memory by  
The Grave Concerns Association  
September 2003



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Check [www.lakewoodhistorical.org](http://www.lakewoodhistorical.org) for notices about upcoming programs.