



Brairie Gazette



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL 2011

IS THERE A FUTURE FOR THE LAKEWOOD THEATRE?

(Part Two)

By Mathew Hulton

Why should we care that a 74-year-old building sits vacant? If there is a 12-screen Cineplex at the Towne Center and a 15-screen Cineplex near I-5, why would we need this theater anymore?

When I posed these questions to the Lakewood Historical Society, their answers were unanimous. "It is the grandest place there is in Lakewood," proclaimed Society President Becky Huber. Upon forming the historical society in 1998, Vice President Glen Spieth chose the "iconic image" of the theater for their official seal.

Huber said that in 2006, the theater was strongly considered for the permanent location of the Lakewood History Museum, but that too many changes would need to be made, and if altered that the structure, however "elegant," would lose its authenticity.

When asked about re-opening the theater, Huber is convinced that "the community *would* get behind it." In September of 2010, the City of Lakewood took a big step forward in heeding the voice of the community. By financing an official Rehabilitation and



Lakewood Theatre gets every detail freshly painted

Potentials Report, the city now knows exactly what is wrong, what is right, what needs to be fixed, and most importantly, how much it will cost. Despite the building's exterior being in remarkably good shape, the price tag for full restoration sits at about \$2.5 million.

Now the ball is in the court of Seattle-based Gramor Development, who purchased the entire Lakewood Colonial Center in 1999 for \$15 million. Recent interviews with Gramor suggest that they would be willing to lease the theater to an ambitious

tenant, should one step forward. They are not interested in parceling off and selling the theater by itself.

As of now, Gramor has yet to look into the restoration required, and no tenant is likely to invest \$2.5 million in a building that they do not own.

I sat down with local journalist, author, and Pierce College instructor Steve Dunkelberger to discuss his opinions on a topic he has been covering since the mid-1990's.

Over his venti white chocolate mocha, he recalled that in the mid 1980's, "people just kind of walked away [from the theater] as if they were gonna come back, and never did."

Since then, the occasional city Christmas party was all that really got the doors open. Although Huber's view was optimistic, Dunkelberger was viewing the situation through "the realities of money" and he conceded that, "dealing with reality is part of the process." (Continued on page 7)

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PRAIRIE GAZETTE

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The staff of Prairie Gazette actively encourages input from the Society's members as well as the general public regarding story ideas or any other aspects of this newsletter, and the Lakewood Historical Society.

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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 our website for information on events and activities

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

Newsletter Editor:
Stephen Neufeld

President's Message

All nonprofit organizations rely almost entirely on volunteers to fill vital roles to accomplish their goals. **Over 75 people** stepped forward in the last 4 months to help the Lakewood Historical Society. The majority of them assisted in our event in July at Villa Madera. Their recognition is elsewhere in the newsletter. What was amazing is that many of them had neither participated in any of our previous events nor were members of the Society.

A number of them are now volunteering in other activities. **Barbara Scott** and **Carol Else** were already volunteering as docents and helped with the event. Barbara has also stepped forward as Chairman of the Collections Committee. **Matt Hulton**, one of the tour guides at Villa Madera, a student at UWT in history, will be a docent in the museum and assist **Meg Justus** in the research of our next exhibit. **Richard Sims**, a Tacoma resident, helped Meg with the school exhibit and has returned to help with the new one.

Another Society member who will be a docent is **Billy Finley**. She has lived in Lakewood since 1957, retired after 23 years at Clover Park Vocational Technical School and volunteers at the Lakewood Senior Activity Center. I am really pleased to have one of our most loyal members return as a docent. **Edie Brewer**, a descendant of one of the area's pioneers, is returning to her normal activities after recovering from health challenges in the last two years.

Volunteers have also stepped forward to fill leadership roles. Just as we were recovering from the loss of **Dave Sclair**, not one but two people agreed to fill the vacancies on the Society board. **Lee Olson** comes with forty years experience in business management and marketing. She has flawlessly assumed the position of Marketing Committee Chair and is actively pursuing new avenues of promoting the Society. The other committee members include **Barbara Lord Nelson** who joined the board last year and **Stephen Neufeld** is the newsletter editor and website manager.

The other vacancy was filled by **Delma Gantt**, a Lakewood resident since 2000, retired from the Food and Beverage Department at St Claire Hospital in January 2011. Her leadership skills attained with 27 years in the Army Reserves will be very useful as she takes on responsibilities as a member of the Program Committee.

By no means have we filled all of our positions. It has just become clear how much has been done by only a few people. Because we have become more involved in new activities, our needs for more volunteers continue to increase. Museum docents are always welcome for 2 or 4 hours a month. If you have skills or experience that could help the Society, don't hesitate to contact Becky at 253-582-8682 or email me at:
craftyhubers@comcast.net.

Yours Respectfully,

Becky Huber

New Artist's Corner Exhibitors Selected



Karen Marie Petrillose

(above) will have her artwork on display in the Lakewood History Museum from September 21 through November 21, 2011. She has lived in Lakewood for 10 years and works as a cake decorator with the Fred Meyer Company. A classically trained pianist with a bachelor's degree in piano performance, Karen has her husband to thank for her expansion into painting by giving her a class with William Hewson of Seattle. She was hooked on watercolor from the very first session.

Hand-painted silk scarves are another one of Karen's passions thanks to the inspiration of Beverly Pederson. She has received awards at the Puyallup State Fair, Peninsula Art League Show, and Proctor District Art Fest. Most recently she received 2nd place at the Lakewood Gardens 2011 Mayfest Art Show

sponsored by the Lakewood Arts Commission.

If you are interested in Karen's work, you can email her at:

deandean03@hotmail.com

Her work is available for sale during regular museum hours. Karen will be available at the Museum's 5th Anniversary Open House on October 13th from 4:30 -6:30 pm.

Marjorie Mankin will display her work from November 22, 2011 through Jan 22, 2012. She has had a love of art since early childhood. She has studied both commercial and fine art with many local and nationally renowned art instructors. These studies have strengthened her personal philosophy that one never stops growing in the knowledge of self expression in the visual arts.

Marjorie has been featured in many exhibits including the Carnegie Institute, Handforth Gallery, Allied Arts and the Frye Museum. She also exhibits extensively in juried and invitational shows and her works have received numerous awards and honors. She is currently exhibiting at Gallery Row in Gig Harbor.

Her philosophy can best be understood by this statement she recently made. "Art is what pumps up your 'tire' so you can keep on rolling." In spite of life's challenges, she continues to rely on her gifts to help see her through.

Marjorie is particularly proud of the many students she has taught. She will showcase some of her students' work at the Artist's Corner and will be available at our Museum for the annual Holiday Open House being held on Saturday, December 17th from 2-4 pm.

Next Major Museum Exhibit Planned

One of the challenges of the limited space at the current location of the Lakewood History Museum has been the ability to add new permanent exhibits. The dilemma was solved this year by starting a yearly rotation of new exhibits in a newly configured space.

The first one installed in March 2011 was "Clover Park: How a School District Helped Build a Community". It has been well received by all of the visitors especially those who attended the local schools and have returned to Lakewood for high school reunions. The Clover Park exhibit will be put in storage in early February, 2011. If you haven't been in to see it yet, be sure to come by before it is taken down.

The new exhibit will explore all the twists and turns taken by this community to become a city. Cityhood had been sought for 35 years before the fourth and finally successful attempt in 1995.

Meg Justus, who researched and developed the school district exhibit, has been rehired to work on this one. She will start by interviewing any number of residents who contributed to the endeavor. Prominently featured will be **Lt General (Ret) Bill Harrison**, Lakewood's first mayor.

Plans are to debut the exhibit in time for the City's 16th Anniversary on February 28, 2012. We ask that anyone who has photos or artifacts that will help tell the story to please contact **Becky Huber** at the Museum at **253-682-3480** or e-mail her at **craftyhubers@comcast.net**.

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING!

We Couldn't Have Done it Without YOU!

Our last newsletter did not have the space to list the names of our volunteers who helped with "A Walk into History at Villa Madera" on July 31st, 2011. It was a huge success because of all of your hard work.

Soldiers from the 472nd Signal Company at Joint Base Lewis McChord:

THANK YOU, VILLA MADERA VOLUNTEERS!

CO-CHAIRS:
BECKY HUBER,
BARBARA LORD
NELSON



We especially thank the Co-Chair of the Committee, **Barbara Lord Nelson**. She worked closely with our caterer and ensured that we had a superb selection of hors d'oeuvres. During the day of the event, she coordinated the activities of the tour guides and volunteers in the kitchen.



CPT Ben Schneller, Company Commander; 1SG Ronald Phillips, SSG Tony Morales, SSG Dave Knottnerus, SGT Jacquiline Grotenhuis, SGT David Ogden, SPC Jessica Batt, SPC Alex Allende, SPC Rebecca Herrera, PFC Kevin Gouge, PFC Jasmine Johnson, PFC Tim Tichonchik, PV2 Derek Pursell.

Above: Soldiers from the 472nd Signal Co. receive instruction from Barbara Lord Nelson.

Right: Matt Hulton, Pat Nelson and Marilyn Swartz enjoy the festivities.

Above Right: Event Co-chair Barbara Lord Nelson smiles warmly!



Other committee members included Connie Coleman-Lacadie, Fae Crabill, Carol Else, Heather Ferrel, Gary Fowler, Jessica Hanson, Gloria Hill, John Huber, Matt Hulton, Tonya Jackson, Meg Justus, Shannon Kreuger, Laurel Lemke, Jan Mitchell Luze, Pamela Maddess, Conti and Judy Davis Mahshi, Charlie Maxwell, Jan McCaffrey, Genevieve McIntrye, Dick Meier; Brant, Brendon, Riley and Rolland Nelson, Pat Nelson, Carol Nichols, Jon Paulson, Barbara Scott, Sue Scott, Vivian Short, Glen Spieth, Margaret Storey, Marilyn Swartz, Linda VanDyk and Gwen Young.



Top Left: Margaret Storey and Carol Else review guest lists, making sure all is in order!
Middle Left: Dick Meier and Connie Coleman-Lacadie admire the 1929 Chrysler Roadster from the LeMay Family Collection Museum.
Bottom Left: Riley Nelson entertains on keyboard, by the lake.
Top Right: Conti and Judy Davis Mahshi enthusiastically pose for the camera.
Bottom Right: Laurel Lemke and Pamela Maddess pause among the roses.



Lakewood History Museum

6211 Mount Tacoma Drive SW

253.682.3480

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

Museum Hours:

12 to 4 pm

Wednesday thru Saturday

***Group Tours arranged
by appointment***

Fifth Anniversary Open House

The Lakewood History Museum, “the little museum that could”, will be celebrating its 5th anniversary in October, 2011. Who would have thought that a small group of dedicated volunteers with the help of a part time museum consultant could have accomplished this!

Several years ago when the recession hit, we came very close to closing the museum for lack of operating funds. The measures taken were successful and we are now on a path of continual improvements of exhibits and displays. In March, 2011 we debuted our new exhibit space featuring the History of the Clover Park School District and a rotating display of Lakewood artists in our new “Artist Corner”. Our current featured artist is Karen Marie Petrillose, 2nd place winner at Lakewood Gardens Mayfest, 2011, that was sponsored by the Lakewood Arts Commission.

Funding is now more assured with donations from our loyal Society, business and community members, funds from the City of Lakewood from the Lodging Tax Grant and the support of our property manager. The very successful major fund raising event held at Villa Madera in July was another piece of the puzzle put into place.

To celebrate this milestone and our accomplishments, we will have an Open House on Thurs, October 13th from 4:30-6:30 pm. Come meet Karen and view her beautiful artwork. Her watercolors, silk scarves and note cards are available for sale. Refreshments will be served. Free and open to the public.

Lakewood Theatre (from Page 1)

He noted that in order for any investor to take interest in restoring the theater, strong evidence is needed to show they would see a return. "Any sort of business plan to operate the Lakewood Theatre would involve rental income as a venue," understanding that movie ticket stubs may not be able to pay all the bills, he asks, "why can't it be the Swiss of Lakewood?" A suggestion that implies that the theater could also serve as "an anchor music or performance venue" to the community.

While Dunkelberger may be right when he says that most people "aren't as enamored with the movie theater experience as the convenience of watching it at home," he stands behind the rest of the community in not wanting to see this land-mark fade away from the landscape, as it did in the newspapers.

Although the Lakewood Theatre has stood on its foundations for three-quarters of a century, it has not been designated a Historical Landmark by the City of Lakewood. Doing so would not only raise awareness of the theaters' past significance, but of its potential future uses, as well. As an added incentive, Dunkelberger reiterates that locally designated historical site renovations receive a 20% tax break.

The near 600 plush blue seats that have not been eaten by vermin still sit vacant. The polished hardwood floors are amassed with a thick layer of dust. While it will take a great initiative to

restore the building and bring it up to ADA code, it need not sit vacant for another 27 years. While a task of this magnitude may seem like a gamble, further demographic testing will be needed to assess the actual feasibility of carrying out the renovations.



Does anybody remember these days? What year is it?

The theater may have faded out of the newspapers with a whimper, but the structure itself is strong, with an enduring legacy, and a silver screen yearning to shine once more.

The following update is information from Becky Huber.

Since this article was written, more interest in the theater has been shown by the local performing arts community. In July, 2011, council members and staff from the City of Lakewood, the

Lakewood Playhouse and the Broadway Center of the Performing Arts met for a thorough walk through of the theater. The rudimentary requirements for the facility to be used for live performances are in place and includes an orchestra pit and dressing rooms.

Further discussion with Gramor's property manager after the tour, indicate a willingness to consider other alternatives to a lease agreement. If major donors stepped forward to give impetus to the funding of the project, there are professionals in the community who would provide the expertise necessary to make this viable.

In the last month, Gramor Development has continued to show their commitment in maintaining the building. A fresh coat of paint has been applied to the building and they are now in the process of upgrading the electrical system.

Like Sleeping Beauty, the Lakewood Theatre is waiting for her Prince Charming to awaken her to a new future. The Lakewood Historical Society and the City of Lakewood are ready and waiting for that to happen.

Please stay tuned for future developments on the Lakewood Theatre!

Lakewood Historical Society
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~ Programs and Events ~

Thurs, October 13th, 4:30-6:30 pm; *Lakewood History Museum's 5th Anniversary Open House* at 6211 Mt Tacoma Dr SW, open to the public, refreshments served.

Tues, October 18th, 7 pm; *Lakewood Churches-Foundation of Faith:* The histories of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Lakeview Congregational Church, Lake City Community Church and St Mary's Episcopal Church will be presented.

Tues, November 15th, 7 pm; *Annual Meeting* and special program entitled, *A Look Back: Afghanistan and Iraq*, will be presented by Pierce College history instructor, John Simpson. He has been an imbedded photo journalist seven times and will give his unique perspective.

Sat, December 17th, 2-4 pm; *Annual Holiday Open House* at the Lakewood History Museum, 6211 Mt Tacoma Dr SW. Refreshments served.

Remember, monthly meetings are held in our new location in the Parish Hall at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to the Lakewood Library.

*******Check out our website for more information and current events*****
www.LakewoodHistorical.org**