

Lakewood Historical Society Newsletter

Because our History Matters.

February/March 2006

Volunteer Positions Open

Volunteers with the Lakewood Historical Society are a fun bunch that enjoys hosting events and scheduling programs to create, preserve and display the history of our Lakewood home.

We currently have openings in membership drives, fund raising, event planning and programs. Come join us. Please call LHS at 682-3480.

"History of Boy Scouts in Lakewood and the Nation"

Tuesday February 21 7:00 pm
CloverPark High School
Performing Arts Center

Have you even been in Boy Scouts? Or volunteered to help?

On Tuesday, February 21, the Lakewood Historical Society is hosting *The History of Boy Scouts in Lakewood and the Nation* presentation by Professor Terry Cooney on Tuesday, February 21 at 7:00 pm at the CloverPark High School Performing Arts Center located at 11023 Gravelly Lake Drive, Lakewood, WA 98499.

Professor Cooney, Professor of History at University of Puget Sound, holds the Robert G. Albertson Professorship. He earned his BA in History (Harvard University, 1970) and MA, PhD in History (State University of New York-Stony Brook, 1971 and 1976).

Alan Billingsley, Boy Scouts of America Scout Master will present



Together
Norman Rockwell 1947

Lakewood Boy Scouts Today. Boy Scout memorabilia will be on display. If you have even volunteered to help with Boy Scouts or were a Boy Scout in your youth, call Barbara at 984-7299. We'd like to hear your story. This will be a fun event with several Lakewood Boy Scout troops in attendance.

LHS Committee Action

President's Report

LHS now has a message phone (253-682-3480) and an email address (lakewoodhistorical@hotmail.com) with a monitoring staff and backup.

The Society just signed the contract for the 2006 Grant from the City of Lakewood in the amount of \$50,000. This allows LHS to continue on its path:

- To establish a "storefront" museum while planning for the development and promotion of a permanent Lakewood History Museum.
- To continue the professional services contract with a museum consultant to

assist in the design, implementation, growth and development of the interim and permanent museum.

- To embark on a major fundraising campaign to earn revenue for the museum maintenance and operation expenses.
- To develop professional brochures and other marketing tools, including the design and production of a quality Lakewood Historical Society web site.

Look for things to be happening soon. Your Planning Committee is and has been working long hours to select the best options to proceed with and we will need the help of all in the society members to succeed.

Glen Spieth

Planning Committee

The draft of our long range (10 year) plan will be submitted for study and approval of the Board of Directors at their February meeting. This plan covers the major steps the Lakewood Historical Society must take in the next five years and in the longer term in the areas of membership; fund raising and financial management; public relations and marketing; collection, conservation, exhibition and education; as well as space and needs analysis and facility development.

After the board's review, a final draft will be released to membership. If members want to understand more of this process, they may attend a board meeting. Board meetings are open to members.

The study of potential permanent museum sites has moved ahead with the employment of a local architectural and engineering firm to survey the Boatman - Ainsworth house and the Mueller Harkins Airport hangar. The survey will develop preliminary information on the physical condition of the buildings and the extent of work involved to convert them for public museum use, along with some proposed strategies for developing the properties.

At the same time, the search for an appropriate site for a storefront museum continues. Success eludes us.

Brad MacGowan

Our Lakewood Heritage (Part 1)

By Val Dumond (www.valdumond.com)

Lakewood was called the Prairie in the beginning - an expanse of land about 20 miles square, dotted with small lakes and occasional stands of Oak and Douglas Fir trees. Steilacoom and Nisqually Indians held pow-wows on the Prairie - before the advent of the White hunters, trappers and settlers.



This abundant Nisqually Prairie, midway between the Columbia River and the city of Vancouver, BC, was chosen by the British as the site of one of its fur trading operations, the Hudson Bay Company, in 1833.

Hunters began to set up farming on the Prairie. One of these farms, at the present site of Western State Hospital, was leased by the US Army in 1849 to serve as a military post following an Indian attack on Fort Nisqually.

The new fort, called Fort Steilacoom, was used to quell Indian uprisings. Settlers from as far away as the Puyallup Valley used the Fort as a protection from danger.

About that time the first grist mill (1850), saw mill (1852) and flour

mill (1855) were set up in the area now known as the Chambers Creek Estuary. Immigrants began to arrive in covered wagons over Naches Pass in 1853 after Washington became a Territory.

As the new population increased, so did hostilities with the native tribes. Indian uprising continued over land they considered theirs, but was being rented by the U.S. government to the Hudson Bay company at \$50 a month.

Nisqually Chief Leschi became a tragic martyr when he was falsely accused of murder as a result of one such uprising. He was hung on February 18, 1858 in a grove of oak trees near where the Oakbrook Shopping Center now stands.

The era known as The Indian Wars brought to Fort Steilacoom many army lieutenants and captains who would make names for themselves during the Civil War - General George B. McClellan, Confederate General George E. Pickett, Union General Philip H. Sheridan and Union General U.S. Grant who later became President.

McClellan was selected in March 1853 to supervise the survey for the location of the western terminus of the much-anticipated Northwest Pacific Railway. However, the intervention of the Civil War delayed actual construction of the road until the 1870's. Many small communities on Puget Sound vied for the distinction of being the western terminus. The selection of Tacoma was announced on July 14th, 1873 bringing about a thrilling drama centered on the prairie near Gravelly Lake.

As the railroad progressed within a few miles of Tacoma in September 1873, a financial panic caused the railroad's financiers to fail. With the railroad's solvency in question and payrolls in arrears, the construction crew made up largely of tough ex-miners from the Cariboo gold fields of British Columbia, refused to work; they set up barricades at Clover Creek, a station then called Skookumville. In a scenario that matched suspense movies of the Clark Gable-Spencer Tracy era, an engineer named E.S. "Skookum" Smith convinced the crews that the track must reach the western terminus during the time limitation set by the US government. The future of the Puget Sound rested with

them! The last spike was driven at 3 p.m. on December 16, 1873. The first train arrived at the prearranged point for the celebration just 24 hours before the expiration of the charter.

During the late 1800's, while England and the United States bickered over the 49th Parallel, the Prairie began to vanish. Homes and roads were built, with power lines at their side. The prolific Douglas Fir, no longer burned by the Indians, grew out of control. The land wrested by the British from the Indians, then by the U.S. from the British, became part of the 42nd state of the Union in 1889.

By the late 1800's Indians and settlers were learning to live together, sometimes holding joint celebrations in the summertime on the natural picnic grounds of the Prairie. Contests of horseback riding often accompanied a good old-fashioned salmon bake.

In the next issue of The Lakewood Historical Society Newsletter, author Val Dumond takes us from the first school and first home through present day.

Among the Best in Lakewood

Lakewood Chamber of Commerce

Thank you to our Lakewood Chamber of Commerce for hosting "Our Lakewood Heritage" by Val Dumond on their website.

<http://lakewood-wa.com/home.htm>.

Committee Chairs

Thank you to our Lakewood Historical Society Committee Chairs. These are dedicated members who use their skills and talents to preserve our Lakewood history.

Election Results

The LHS has completed its election process to elect 2006 Officers and Directors. Based on the votes from LHS membership, the new Officers and Board of Directors are:

President Glen Speith
Vice President Becky Huber
Secretary T. D. Imholt
Treasurer Gary Fowler

Historian Cy Happy

Directors

Jack Averil
Beverley Bills
Wayne Herstad
John Huber

Larry Humphrey
Brad MacGowan
Walter Neary
Wayne Pieper

Elizabeth Poinsett
Stephanie Walsh
Jane Whitney
Barbara Wyatt

Next Meeting

**Tuesday, February 21st at CloverPark High
School Performing Arts Center
7:00 pm**

**History of Boy Scouts in Lakewood and the
Nation**

Committees

Is this your year to get involved with LHS? Don't know where to start? Take that first step onto a committee and learn more about the operations of LHS. Call 682-3480, leave your name, phone number and identify on which committee you'd like to be a part of the team.

LHS has active committees in:

- Finance: Budget, Grants, Contracts (Gary Fowler)
- Planning / Facilities (Gary Fowler / Brad MacGowan)
- Membership (Beverley Bills)
- Programs / Events (John Huber)
- Oral Histories (Donna Cable/Margaret Gunter)
- Telephone (Elizabeth Poinsett)
- PR / Marketing (Stephanie Walsh)
- Newsletter (Barbara Wyatt)
- Mailing
- Markers & Monuments (Glen Spieth)
- Collections / Archives (Wayne Herstad/Cy Happy)



Tomorrow's Leader
Norman Rockwell 1959

Mark Your Calendars

Tuesday, February 21

**History of Boy Scouts
in Lakewood and the Nation**

7:00 PM CloverPark High School
Performing Arts Center

Questions?
Call Lakewood
Historical Society at
682-3480

Tuesday, April 18th

**Mark this date. LHS is
awaiting
confirmation from
the speaker.**

Become a Member Today

Be sure to join the Lakewood Historical Society today for only \$15 for an individual membership or \$25 for a family. Membership dues help pay for programs, promote our Lakewood community, and recognize and preserve key historical sites through the Lakewood area.

Membership includes a subscription to the LHS newsletter that provides notice of upcoming

meetings and some fascinating facts about our Lakewood history.

Send your check to **Lakewood Historical Society,
P.O. Box 98014, Lakewood, WA 98499.**

If you have questions, please call 682-3480 or email lakewoodhistorical@hotmail.com for more information.

LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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LAKWOOD, WASHINGTON 98499