

# Prairie Gazette

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY-JUNE, 2007



## Future of Historic Hilltop Ward Site Pondered

Public input solicited for potential uses for site overlooking park

Written by Walter Neary

Photos by Ed Kane

People are asked to share their opinions by May 18 about what the city should do about the abandoned Ward building at the crest of the water tower hill in Fort Steilacoom Park. The dangerous ruins have long been a 'hang out' in the park since the building was abandoned and partly demolished for disaster training.

Among the questions: Should any part of the buildings be left standing? Should there be a display or information of some sort about the area's history? What should replace the buildings at that

location? Should something be done to make the hill more accessible?

A copy of the city survey may be downloaded, if you have Microsoft Word on a computer, from <http://www/walterneary.net/wardsurvey.doc> Or if it's simpler, call Councilman



Hilltop Ward has fallen into total disuse since its days as a hospital ward and then a search and rescue training site. Though fenced in it has become a safety hazard for people cutting the fence for unauthorized access and illegal activities.

## Museum Receives New Donations

By Janda Volkmer

Donated by Jim and Florence Ball, LHS members of Oakbrook, a c. 1889 rocking chair that was once owned by Jim's grandfather, Pastor Karl Killian, who lived on a farm in McMillan, makes for a great addition to the museum's displays. Pastor Killian founded the historic Elbe Lutheran Church and later officiated at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Puyallup. Florence Ball is shown at left with the donated chair, along with two other donations from her family, a clay bean pot and crockery bowl, both estimated to be from around 1900.



Florence Ball enjoying a final moment with her donations to the Lakewood History Museum.

Walter Neary at 229-3620 and he can send you a copy. You can also email thoughts to the city's parks director, Mary Dodsworth, at [mdodsworth@cityoflakewood.us](mailto:mdodsworth@cityoflakewood.us) or write her care of Lakewood City Hall. Neary would encourage people to use the form, because it asks a lot of detailed but good questions.

The ruins are within a National Register of Historic Places district, because of the nearby presence of Fort Steilacoom Museum, the first official U.S. presence in Washington Territory.

However, it has long been recognized that of many historic

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GARRY OAK  
The Garry Oak is the official tree of the City of Lakewood.



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### Prairie Gazette

Prairie Gazette is the official publication of the Lakewood Historical Society. The newsletter is published six times a year. Distribution is directly to members and available at the Lakewood History Museum at the address listed below.

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](http://www.lakewoodhistorical.org)

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## President's Message

I know most of you are happy to see our "crazy winter weather" leave us. I'm sure a lot of you are getting back into your outdoor activities, especially gardening. Once I see the Vinca blooming by my mailbox I know spring is here. As I work in the yard I've enjoyed finding new clusters of bleeding hearts and trilliums. Fortunately, my resident squirrels have not dug up all of the tulip bulbs and my flowering trees are glorious.

This is also the time of year for the Society to get reenergized in pursuing new activities and projects. May is National History Month so our program reflects special projects our Society and City have pursued. We also will be debuting our new exhibit, "The Natural History of Lakewood" that follows closely on the heels of a very well attended April program on the same topic. We will also be showcasing the entries of the Photo Contest in the Museum that Jane Whitney has been diligently coordinating. See details in the article on page 5

The LHS will have a booth at SummerFEST on June 23 from noon to 6 PM. This will be your last chance to buy Hawaii raffle tickets, the drawing will be at 4:30 PM. Please stop by to see us, we will be asking for volunteers to man the booth. Fortunately, the layout will be much better than last year, we will be in the middle of all of the action and not in the "back 40".

I'd like to thank all of our members for renewing. Your continued support is vital to ensuring we meet our goals. Our membership is growing with at least 3-5 new members a month. It is only through your promotion of our activities and programs that we get "new blood", ensuring the longevity of the Society. Take every opportunity to talk about the Society and the Museum to all of the organizations and clubs you participate in. Please let me know if you would like me to make a short presentation at one of your meetings.

Becky Huber  
President, LHS



## Lakewood History Museum

6211 Mount Tacoma Drive SW

253.682.3480

[www.lakewoodhistorical.org/](http://www.lakewoodhistorical.org/)

### Museum Hours:

October to March:

12 to 4 pm, Friday and Saturday

March to October:

11 to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday

Group tours arranged by appointment

## Hilltop Ward, from page 1

buildings built for the hospital, the ward building has little value. The following is from the official 1964 history of Western State by Clara Cooley:

“Dr. Taylor recommended that a ward building be



Lakewood Historical Society's president Becky Huber (top) joined others during a public session to propose uses for the Hilltop site.

constructed on the farm side (of the road to) relieve congestion in

the hospital ... The 'white house' on the hill was completed in 1932. It was a cheaply constructed white brick building of three stories ... The location was scenically beautiful, but impractical, as no central heating could be provided and the patients had a long walk to their meals in the patients' central dining room. The wards in this building have been vacated one by one as the population decreased until it now (1964) stands vacant.”

The ruins are now covered with graffiti, and years of disaster training by emergency personnel have left the ruins looking like something in a war zone. Indeed, a recent article in the Pierce College newspaper



Lakewood Parks and Recreation Director Mary Dodsworth has placed the questionnaire on the city website, [www.cityoflakewood.us/](http://www.cityoflakewood.us/) and is seeking additional citizen input for future plans for the soon-to-be cleared demolition site. Removal of debris will begin soon.

said many students enjoy visiting the ruins because they are so visually interesting. Even though the wards were not well used, a number of 'ghost hunters' have visited the site and claimed to have received impressions of ghosts and what not.

## Board Meeting Highlights

1. We have now collected over \$2500 from Hawaii raffle ticket sales. We only have 2 more months to sell them so please come by the Museum to pick some up to sell to your friends.
2. Our Photo Contest has ended and we have 11 entries that will be displayed in the Museum soon. Jane Whitney is coordinating a special event to award the prizes to the winners.
3. We are still in great need of more Docents to staff the Museum. We hope to open Wed-Sat, 11AM-4 PM this month. Please call Becky Huber if interested. A key box has been installed to facilitate entry into the Museum.
4. Jeffrey Koontz, a senior at the UW-Tacoma, has volunteered to be an intern assigned to the Museum for 10 weeks. He will be assisting Janda in

doing research for displays.

5. We have selected Prairie Hall at Little Church on the Prairie for the location of our Annual Meeting that will include entertainment by the Memory Singers and a special dessert. So please put Thurs, Oct 18<sup>th</sup> on your

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**NEXT BOARD MEETING:  
JUNE 5 AT 6:00 PM, LAKEWOOD  
CITY HALL, CONFERENCE ROOM  
1E.**

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calendar now. A special invitation with the details will be sent in Sept.

6. I'd like to thank those members who attended the special Open House on Mar 24<sup>th</sup> of the Krause's home of Interlaaken. It is a true gem that now has new owners who plan to join the Society.

7. Jack Avril has resigned from the Board and Walter Neary is soliciting his replacement. His valued contributions and commitment have been appreciated.
8. The Fund Raising Committee has nearly completed the mailing for the Annual Fund (now called the Museum Fund) Campaign. Look for this appeal to be coming to you soon.
9. The membership renewal campaign is nearly completed. Thanks to Stephanie Walsh the process has become more streamlined and more efficient. Thanks to everyone who has renewed.
10. I'm glad to report that TD Imholt, our Secretary and Board member, has had a successful procedure that has improved her condition, she is hoping to be on her feet and home soon. Our prayers and good wishes continue to go out to she and Bill.



# Rocks and Weeds

## Lakewood's lakes a gift of glaciers

by Jane Whitney

What geological forces of nature formed our landscape? What plants were able to thrive and make our area livable? Sound like an interesting speech or a boring one about rocks and weeds? Well, about 56 people found out the answers to these questions and more by attending a wonderful presentation by Lakewood docent Cheryl Hart-Guss, a



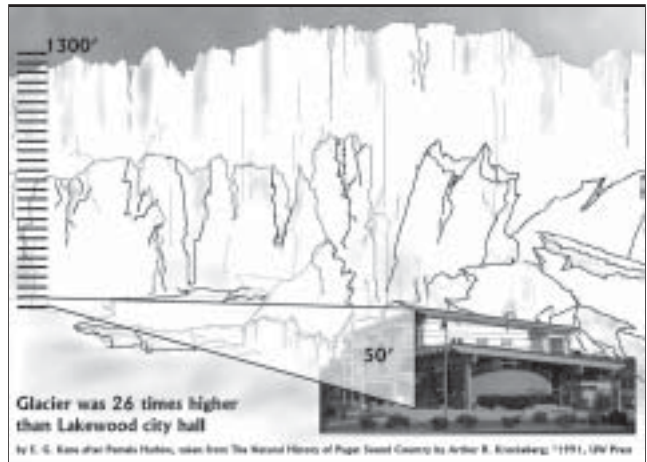
Cheryl Hart-Guss

Lakewood docent. Her speech, a part of the Historical Society's program series, was both informative and entertaining.

We encourage all our members to attend this series of programs and to bring guests who may afterwards increase our membership.

Assisted by her slides, Mrs.

Hart-Guss described the Lakewood area as basically a fertile gravel pit, formed by a huge glacier up to 1,300 feet thick over 15 thousand years ago. The glacier gradually receded, leaving behind the mountain ranges, valleys and plains we know today. She told of a land mass on our continent slowly invaded by land from the ocean which moved the border westward and resulted in the extreme weather contrasts. For example, in a thirty mile area, the rainfall ranges from



At the point where the glacier covered Lakewood it was about 1300 feet high, 26 times the height of our city hall.

17 inches to 250 inches on the Olympic peninsula with the 8,000 feet high Mt Olympus. By 2 million years ago, all of our volcanoes were smoking, with Mt. St. Helens the youngest, dating to about 4,500 years ago. All of this land is moving at 1 ¼ inches per year! She quoted Will Durant, "Civilization exists by geological consent and is subject to change without notice." The last glacier or

Continued on page 7

# Researching Your Family History

Presented by Pat Wood

Summary by Janda Volkmer (edits by Pat Wood)

Our March program brought Pat Wood, long-time genealogist and Corresponding Secretary of the Tacoma-Pierce County Genealogical Society, to share advice on how and why to get started in recording your family history. Pat also shared insights and websites for all of us who may have started searching then parked that genealogy bus.

Pat is an enthusiastic and shamelessly Irish genealogy cheerleader and she knows her subject well. Years ago, when learning her Genealogy ABC's, she was fortunate to have Cy Happy as a mentor, and she was pleased to

note that Cy was in the audience. The following is a summary of Pat's remarks.

Start with what you know! Do a "Pedigree Chart" and "Family Group Sheets" (see resource list) on yourself and immediate family members. These forms list dates and places of Significant Life Events such as birth marriage and death. Begin your ancestral quest with those individuals closest to you. Talk with siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. You are looking for the pieces to a large jigsaw puzzle entitled My Family's History.

Continued on page 7



Pat Wood, Corresponding Secretary of the Tacoma-Pierce County Genealogical Society, presenting her suggestions for launching your own family genealogical search.

Donations, from page 1

Following are the descriptions for the Ball Family donations.



Photos by Ed Kane

**1 Rocking Chair** – solid wood –  
Description  
Estimated age: 1889 (+/-)



**1 Brown Clay Bean Pot**  
Description  
Estimated age: c 1900

**1 Crockery Kitchen Bowl**  
Description: Cream  
Estimated age: c 1900

The Lakewood Historical Museum is always looking for donations of artifacts to represent Lakewood's history. If you have questions or have something you would like to donate, please contact Museum Director Janda Volkmer.

### Open House at the Museum

Well, our photography contest has ended and the photos are FABULOUS! Come and see them displayed at the Lakewood History Museum as of May 18. The awards, provided by Robi's, will be presented to the winners by Lakewood Mayor Claudia Thomas at an open house for our membership at the museum on May 30<sup>th</sup>, from 5pm to 7pm.

We are grateful to those who submitted their photographs from the teens and 1920's which include Iva Alice Mann with her two little daughters, (one of whom is our board member Elizabeth Poinsett, now 96 years old,) to four ladies in their "flapper" dresses with their golf bags at the Lakeside golf course, the first poster advertising the sale of properties in Lakewood in 1910 for 100 dollars a lot and promising the "no saloons will be allowed in Lakewood"! So come one, come all to enjoy what your fellow members have shared with us all.

- Jane Whitney

### Upcoming Exhibition at Lakewood Library

96-year-old local artist Ruth Hofto will be showing some of her paintings at an exhibition at the Lakewood Library from May 2<sup>nd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>. While Mrs. Hofto has painted scenes and portraits all over the world, this current exhibit will include some of her Northwest landscapes, including Washington prairies, Tacoma's old downtown, Mount Rainier, Cape Disappointment and Reflection Lake. These should be of great interest to Lakewood history fans!



ARTIST RUTH HOFTO

A reception will be held on May 16<sup>th</sup>, from 5:30pm-8pm.

### Help the Lakewood Historical Society

**Volunteers needed in many areas. Please call today: 253.682.6480. Your experience and willingness to help is needed**

### Colonial Center Reaches 70th

The Colonial Center is turning 70 this year, and LHS would like to commemorate the occasion by collecting stories and memories from our members for the next issue of the Prairie Gazette. Please send them into the editors by May 31<sup>st</sup> to be included!



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# Museum Fund Campaign Kick-Off

## Board of Directors and Campaign Chairs Kick Off Museum Fund Campaign

The Lakewood Historical Society's Mission is to actively preserve our history and make it available for all to enjoy. Just a year ago the Society's Board of Directors agreed to gather its collections and establish a museum to fulfill this purpose.

In October 2006 that goal became a reality when the Lakewood History Museum opened its doors in the historic 1937 Lakewood Colonial Center. Since then, with limited hours, we have welcomed over 250 visitors. We are adding new exhibits, acquiring artifacts, recruiting members and volunteers and raising community awareness.

Now we must raise funds to sustain our new museum, operations and activities. We are writing grants and doing fund-raising activities. To bolster these efforts, we are embarking on our first Museum Fund campaign. ***Our Board members and Campaign Chairs are leading the way with 100% participation in gifts upfront.***

We hope you share their support and enthusiasm and will join in this effort to help us preserve Lakewood's legacy ***because our history truly does matter.*** We thank you for your generosity.

## Museum Fund Lead Gifts Total \$6,130

Rebecca and John Huber  
Jane Whitney  
T.D. and Bill Imholt  
Gary J. and Karen Fowler  
Cyrus Happy III  
Kris and Sylvia Kauffman  
Shannon Krueger  
Brad and Liz MacGowan  
Walter and Cindy Neary  
Elizabeth Poinsett  
Stephanie and Gregg Walsh

Barbara Wyatt and Linn Larson  
Glen and Marlene Spieth,  
Mayor Claudia Thomas  
LTG Bill and Jo Harrison  
Natalie and Larry Humphrey  
Janda Volkmer, Exec. Dir.

## Recent General Fund Gifts

Paul and Donna Casey  
Dr. William and Andrea Gernon  
Grace Guis  
Venette Hagen  
Ann Johnson  
Ron and Sheri VanDusen  
Joan Walston Mar  
Harriett Wolverton  
David and Barbara Young  
Alice Peeples

## Thanks to Our Museum Sponsors

The Lakewood Historical Society is especially grateful to our first business sponsors of the year for leading the way in this new venture.

- **Water Rights, Inc.**
- **Comcast, Inc.**
- **SIGNsations, Inc.**
- **Robi's Camera Center**

Museum sponsors help support the preservation and display of Lakewood's heritage through their charitable contributions. Sponsor's logos are displayed in the Museum entrance, the newsletter and elsewhere as designated.

We invite others to join this prestigious group. For information on sponsorships please contact Becky Huber, President.

## Welcome New Members

Tharon Kirby  
Tom Slee

Richard and Maria Rabisa  
Ardath Eichler  
Joan Cooley  
Darrell and Pat Nelson  
Tom and Shelley McClellan  
Michael and Latonia Morrison  
(Adirondack Real Estate)  
Alice Peeples

**Thanks also to the many renewing members. The list is too long to include in the available space.**

### Mark your calendars!

**May 15**, 7pm: Lakewood's Historic Markers / Preserving Historic Properties at Lakewood Library.

**May 30**, 5-7pm: Open House and awarding of photography competition prizes by Mayor Claudia Thomas at Lakewood History Museum.

**June 19**, 7pm: History of Lakewood Theater with Backstage Tours at Lakewood Playhouse.

**June 23**, 12-6pm: Lakewood SummerFEST at Fort Steilacoom Park (see below).

### LHS at SummerFEST 2007

The LHS will have a booth at SummerFEST 2007 on Sat, June 23rd starting at 12 noon at Ft Steilacoom Park. Stop by and say hello or volunteer to help man the booth for 2 hours. Look out for the sign-up sheet at the May and June meetings. We will continue to sell Hawaii trip raffle tickets until the drawing at 4:30 PM. Need not to be present to win.

Activities include all kinds of entertainment, food, crafts and displays from various community organizations, car show, baseball tournament, a kids play area, a fun run, and train rides. The movie "Charlotte's Web" will be shown at dusk. For more info, visit [www.cityoflakewood.us](http://www.cityoflakewood.us).



## Rocks and Weeds, from page 4

Sound was the Vashon Glacier of 15,000 years ago. This is the glacier which left all the rocks every gardener here digs up and the mineral deposits like those which, when mined, resulted in the canyons of the Butchart Gardens, as well as the underground springs which still feed our lakes, themselves a product of the receding glaciers.

Mrs. Hart-Guss then detailed the native trees and plants, most of which grow wild today. The forest floors are not especially fertile, and our soil is mostly clay of an acid condition, with rain leeching out the minerals needed for plant growth and health. Among the native trees are the familiar Douglas firs, the Rhododendrons,

and the Garry Oak. Of our average annual 40 inches of rain, 70% falls from October to May, creating our Mediterranean climate which is why we have to provide water for our green lawns. Since the pioneers did burn the prairies as did the Indians, the forest took over the Puget Sound basin. Mrs. Hart-Guss addressed the features of the Garry Oak, the Nootka Rose, the Camus Lily and the Lupine, as well as the Douglas fir, the Dogwood and the Rhododendron. The Douglas fir is the most commercially successful tree in human history, she explained, with its botanical name, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, coming from one Scottish botanist, Archibald Menzies (a member of Vancouver's expedition)

and its common name coming from rival Scottish botanist, David Douglas, the first to transplant the tree to Europe. The dogwood is featured in John James Audubon's first book. Many of our plants are edible and were tasted by Meriwether and Clark and were staples of the native Indians.

Among the upcoming programs are presentations on the Mountain View memorial park, several garden tours, Lakewood's early schools, and the Thornwood Mansion history and tour. So "watch this space" and attend to learn more about Lakewood's fascinating history!

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## Family History, from page 4

Ask for names to fill in the gaps in your charts – including nicknames and legal names. (Was Uncle Bud really Henry? And was Grandma Dell actually a Bridget?) When you ask for dates (birth, marriage, death) ask for locations as well. The locations may be surprising and can provide important leads for further sleuthing. Be alert to what might be sensitive topics such as a divorce or perhaps a birth less than 9 months after a marriage.

Are there family records such as scrapbooks, photo albums, family bible, obituaries, letters, certificates and licenses, school records or yearbooks, military discharge papers, copies of old deeds, titles and so on? Who might have the shoe box with the letters written back in 1870 that tells just where in the old country the family was from?

With the information gathered from your family, go on to check at city halls and county courthouses for birth, marriage and death certificates, and at the local churches for baptisms and marriages. These records usually contain names of witnesses or

sponsors who were most likely family members. Note that civil birth records were not common until the early 1900's. A death certificate may provide the previously unknown names of Grandpa's parents.

Obituaries often give a more personal glimpse into the person's hobbies, interests and achievements. And they often include other family names that can be explored. Consider obtaining cemetery records. You may discover some unknown relations buried with Great Grandmother.

Local libraries and historical societies have newspaper archives (search for obituaries), city directories, old phone directories and maps. Maps are invaluable. They can show street name changes; streets or acreage no longer existing, and jurisdictional lines.

Federal Census records are available from 1790-1930 and are an important resource for every genealogical researcher. Since 1850 the census gives at the very least each person's name, age, place of birth and occupation, and shows all members of the household. As years passed, additionally valuable

questions were added to the census.

Finally, when you get stuck, move to another family line and get help from the following resources. But, most importantly of all, have good fun with **your** version of **My Family's History!**

## Genealogy Resources

### **Family History Library, Tacoma**

So. 12<sup>th</sup> St. & Pearl St.  
or [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

### **Lakewood Public Library**

6300 Wildaire Rd. SW; 253-582-6040

### **Access to census records**

[www.ancestry.com/](http://www.ancestry.com/)

### **NW Room, Tacoma Public Library**

1102 Tacoma Ave. So., 253-591-5666

<http://www.tacomapubliclibrary.org/>

<http://search.tpl.lib.wa.us/obits/>

### **Cyndi's List at [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com)**

A highly valuable international site

### **Genealogical Society/Tacoma-Pierce**

**County** (TPCGS) P.O. Box 1952

Tacoma, WA 98401, 253-572-6650

[www.rootsweb.com/~watpcgs/tpcgs.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/~watpcgs/tpcgs.htm)

**General questions?** Contact Pat Wood

[CelticTwigs@yahoo.com](mailto:CelticTwigs@yahoo.com) or leave message at TPCGS number above.

### **Heritage Quest Library, Sumner**

909 Main Street, Suite 5; 253-863-1806

or [www.heritagequest.com](http://www.heritagequest.com)

## Program Topics for May 15 & May 30

Two interrelated topics commemorate National History Month.  
Lakewood Library starting at 7:00 PM

### Historic Home Registry: Preserving Historic Properties

The Lakewood Landmarks Heritage Advisory Board, an official City Board found in 2000, will give an overview of their activities, and define the processes of property registration and designating historic neighborhoods. They will also cover future endeavors to include the development of signage at Ft Steilacoom Park.

### Historic Markers

Historic markers have been a project supported by the LHS from the beginning. Glen Spieth, Past President, who has been at the forefront of this project will describe what the program involves and what locations have already been recognized. We plan to have a dedication ceremony for the recently placed marker at the Mueller-Harkins Hangar on the CPTC campus.

### Open House at the Museum - May 30, 5-7 pm

Mayor Caudia Thomas presents photo contest awards plus historic marker display.

## Program for June 19<sup>th</sup>

Lakewood Playhouse (Note special Location), 7:00 PM.

History of Lakewood Theater with backstage tours

Marcus Walker, Artistic Director

Come down to Lakewood Playhouse for a rare look behind the scenes with Artistic Director Marcus Walker as he talks about some of the highs and lows of theater in Lakewood over the years. Life in theater is never dull, and as well as tours of depths of backstage at the Playhouse, we will hear about some of their smash hits, opening-night disasters and mysteries from the past.

**Lakewood Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 98014**  
**Lakewood, WA 98496**