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BECAUSE OUR HISTORY MATTERS

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# Brairie Gazette

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY - JUNE 2008



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## ***New exhibits planned; donations received***

### ***Lakewood Schools Exhibits***

Due to a mix-up in schedules, the Washington Early Schools traveling display won't be available until July this year. Consequently, the companion exhibit on Lakewood Schools is being delayed so they may debut at the same time.

The advantage is that it allows us the opportunity to seek additional loans and donations of school memorabilia from the community. If you can help, please contact Janda Volkmer at 253.222.7941 or email [jandavolkmer@msn.com](mailto:jandavolkmer@msn.com) with Lakewood Schools in the subject line.

### ***School items contributed***

Thanks to Margaret (Doten) Marr, CPHS '49 this month we received a wonderful collection of school photos, certificates, report cards (1932-1949) and a graduation diploma from Margaret (Doten) Marr with a number of annotations identifying people, dates and events.

There are senior pictures shared by friends of Margaret portraying a bevy of beautiful young ladies, who are undoubtedly known to many of you in the community. Margaret's father, L.W. Marr, served on the Clover Park District School Board for 29 years, through 1949. Margaret married the late William Marr and resides in Idaho; her brother Bob Doten, lives in DuPont.

We are very grateful for this contribution to our historical archives and will be including many of the items in the school exhibit.

### ***Clover Park Celebrates 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary***

The Lakewood History Museum will assist the District with a temporary loan of a small display featuring items representative of the Clover Park School District through the years. If you have items to share, please contact Janda Volkmer or call the Museum. Please see the CP School District newsletters for additional information.

### ***Students Creative Work to be Displayed***

In May and June the Museum will be featuring the creative endeavors of two groups of local students. In May, young men from Boy Scout Troop 51 will be displaying artistic photos resulting from a recent class on digital photography taught by Tod Wolf of Robi's Camera Center. The boys were tasked to use their skills and photograph the "Best of Lakewood" over a period of two weeks. Five winning photographs were selected from the several hundred images submitted. The photographs are currently on display at Lakewood City Hall and will be displayed in the Lakewood History Museum in May.

### ***Students interviewing immigrants***

Teacher Mary Sharp's sophomore class is culminating its study of Pacific Rim Nations by interviewing first and second generation Lakewood area immigrants to learn about their lives in their former homes and their transition to living in America. Students will then create a project or display based on what they learn. The projects will be showcased at Clover Park High School with a final few selected to be on temporary display in the Museum.



## Lakewood Historical Society

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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 Historical Museum, 6211 Mt Tacoma Dr. SW, Lakewood, WA 98499

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.

Content of this publication is copyright protected by the Society and/or the authors and artists.

### 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 the website for information on events and activities.

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

### EDITOR

Dave Sclair  
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## President's Message

Do you think spring is finally here? It has been very hard to enjoy the baseball games we have attended in the last month because of the cold evenings. In spite of everything the flowers and birds know what time it is. It has been such a joy watching the spring bulbs and trees bloom once again. I've been replenishing the feeders more frequently. We even have a pair of Mallard ducks that visit almost every day. I've seen them wait under the tree where the squirrels are eating corn to pick up the leftovers.

The Society Board had our first retreat on March 1<sup>st</sup> at Lakewood. Our main purpose was to get to know each other better and to learn how to make better decisions. Our facilitator, Dan Comsia, lead us through several exercises to get us started. After a catered lunch, we began addressing the biggest decision we need to make-selecting the site for a permanent museum. The top choices are being considered using a list of criteria we developed. We'll announce our decision in the next newsletter.

Another goal we set this year is placing more emphasis on promoting the Museum and Society activities. Over 100 attended the "Buffalo Soldiers" program in February with guests outnumbering members, proving that all of the efforts put into advertizing were effective. No matter what sources we use, our members are our best ambassadors. Please continue to take every opportunity to make announcements about our programs and encouraging your contacts to visit our museum and join the Society.

Another way we are promoting the Society is participating in various community activities, especially those sponsored by the City or the Chamber. Our most recent endeavor was the Lakewood Showcase last month at the Grand Central Casino. We were one of 25 businesses and organizations that participated with over 200 attendees. Another opportunity will be Lakewood SummerFEST on June 21<sup>st</sup> at Ft Steilacoom Park. We will participate again and need volunteers to help man the booth. Over 8,000 people attended last year.

I have noticed that our Museum attendance has been more diverse. We continue to see first time visitors, new members joining after visiting our museum as well as students who are using the museum as a class project. We never tire of hearing stories from our visitors about the early days of Lakewood. We have had group tours- a group of 25 from TCC visited in January and another one is scheduled in July from the Lakewood Senior Center. Please consider the Museum as an outing for your groups. Call in advance to make sure we have extra docents available. We continue to need more docents, so let us know if you'd like to work a three hour shift. Looking forward to seeing you.

Becky Huber  
President

## *How Lakewood grew*

# The little house on the prairie

The following is from  
The News Tribune,  
December. 14, 1975

By Willene Anderson  
TNT Staff Writer

There was snow on the mountain.

The newly married couple stacked firewood beside the barn and covered the outside wooden water pipes to keep them from freezing.

Fruit trees had been planted during the summer that would, in time, bear fruit. Their succulent harvest would fill many larders in years to come.

“As I remember that first winter, it wasn’t very cold,” said Mrs. Loyde Alton. “There was a lot of fog.

“Of course, we were both young, and sometimes when you are young the weather doesn’t seem as bad.”

The year was 1929. In the East, the stock market had failed and its after effects were felt from coast to coast. The country was in the throes of a great depression.

“We were married in Sterling, Kan.,” Mrs. Alton said. “I had visited this area (Lakewood) before my marriage and we both decided it would be a good place to live.

“Lakewood was a rolling prairie land,” Mrs. Alton said. “Since this is gravelly land – that is the reason why they named the lake Gravelly – we didn’t plan to do much farming. We dug rocks for years. And a lot of topsoil was needed.”

Mr. and Mrs. Alton have lived on the same lots for 50 years.

“We watched the community grow around us,” she said.

In those earlier years there were 13 homes scattered in a square that was roughly bordered by DeKoven Drive, a little past Bridgeport Way, Steilacoom Lake and Mount Tahoma Drive.

There were three churches, a few elementary schools spread in the smaller communities,” Mrs. Alton said.

“The homes were pretty far apart,” Mrs. Alton said. “The trees weren’t very tall – there weren’t many trees – and these were scattered around. Here and there you could see clumps of oak and small fir trees.

“Mostly, it was shrub and prairie land,” Mrs. Alton said.

“We made walking trails between the houses,” she continued. “If we wanted to visit, we just put on our bonnet

and started walking across the fields. Feet were used a lot for transportation in those days.” There were a few roads.

Mrs. Alton rode the streetcar downtown to Tacoma each day. She worked in the children’s department of the public library from 1926 until 1932.

The couple owned a Rio cabriolet automobile.

“This was the car with a rumble, or mother-in-law seat,” Mrs. Alton said. “We did visit sometimes, using the car, but the longer trips would have been too costly to make in those days.”

Mr. Alton was a barber. He opened a shop in the 5600 block of South Tacoma Way.

During the first years in the little house on the prairie, Mrs. Alton would shop for daily grocery needs in the shops along Market Street before she boarded the streetcar home. “The streetcar came by every 45 minutes,” she said. “The line closed in a few years after we moved to Lakewood.”

“We didn’t have an icebox or refrigerator,” she said. “This meant we had to buy groceries almost on a day-to-day basis.

“Loyde and I purchased the house and four lots for a sum of \$450 when we first started,” Mrs. Alton said. “At

**Continued on Page 4**

## The little house...

*Continued from Page 3*

that time the county charged \$5 a year in taxes.

“If we had waited, we could have bought several lots a lot cheaper by paying the back taxes,” she said. “But we liked it here.”

The couple bought two additional lots in the years to come.

“Our first home was the greens keepers’ home,” Mrs. Alton said. “When we first moved here this was a golf course. It closed soon after – I don’t know why – maybe there wasn’t enough money. They could only play golf in the summertime.”

Mrs. Alton said the home was used during the summer by the greens keeper, and didn’t have much insulation against the winter chill.

Mrs. Alton can’t remember much celebrating during the Christmas season. Most of the homes on the prairie were “shacks” by today’s standards. There was no gas, and wood stoves were used often.

“I came home from work

and started a fire in the stove to cook supper,” Mrs. Alton said.

The couple had inside running water in their home. This was carried to the house through wooden pipes. They also had inside plumbing. Some of the homes did not.

Terrell’s Grocery Store was on the spot where The Little Church on the Prairie would

She brought willow sprout from the valley and planted it in the front yard. Now, 40 years later, the large tree still affords a nesting place for birds and beauty everywhere.

The couple has chores to do to keep them busy. Life was full in the little house on the prairie.

Most of all, there was love,” Mrs. Alton said.



eventually be built,

Grade school children walked to school. The junior and senior high school students were bused to Jason Lee or Stadium in Tacoma.

There were many smaller communities, Park Lodge, Tillicum, Lake City, Lakeview and Custer.

Alton raised thoroughbred horses. They were kept on the lots near the home. The couple built a barn and planted the fruit trees. Mrs. Alton planted flowers in the yard.

Sometimes they went downtown to a movie or to the Lakewood Ice Arena, which was called “The Oaks” then.

“I didn’t care much for dancing, but it was the place to spend an afternoon,” Mrs. Alton said.

Soon there were the children, Lloyd Jr. and Clifford, to care for. In time there would be four grandchildren.

“Everyone banded together to help each other,” Mrs. Alton said. “We found a joy in

family and our friends.”  
The ‘30s came, and with them growth for Lakewood. The prairie land was more spotted with hoes. Now the trees seemed to grow taller.

“The lakes were used often for pleasure and fun,” Mrs. Alton said.

Lakewood Center was built, and with it a movie theater.

Terrrell sold his grocery store to Norton Clapp and Mrs. Clapp promoted The Little Church on the Prairie,

A funeral home was built. The building now houses the West Precinct of the Pierce County Sheriff’s office.

A water district was formed and metal pipes replaces the wooden ones.

“I remember when they dug the long trenches to lay the pipes,” Mrs. Alton said. “The children would climb down in the ditches and play for hours. Sometimes the children would get lost, the mounds were so long, and you would see a child crawl to the top of the ditch to get his bearings

“There were a lot of muddy washes for mothers,” she said. This wasn’t as easy as one would think, because most of the appliances in the home were crude by today’s standards.

The area grew swiftly after the Second World War. Mrs. Alton went to work in the public library at Ft, Lewis in

1950, retiring in 1967.

“You talked to a soldier assigned to Ft. Lewis,” Mrs. Alton said. “He fussed and fretted about the rain here, and the cold. He talked continually about his home in the South and how he missed the warm weather.

“After his Army tour, you met the same man on the street here and he introduced you to his family,” she said laughing. “Seems he had moved here to live.

“It’s a lovely place to grow in,” she said.

Soon the rolling prairie was filled with homes, shops and people. The automobile came into its greatest day. The children of the pioneers grew up and had families of their own.

The earlier settlers, their work now done, rested quietly in the cemeteries that dotted the prairie land.

Paved roads took the place of the graveled or dirt streets. The paths of the footsteps faded in the dust.

The little house on the prairie was now a comfortable home on a quiet street in the heart of Lakewood. The earlier home had been replaced. Modern conveniences took the place of the old ones.

The first written records of community life in Lakewood was of a picnic on July 4, 1841.

The guest speaker was the Rev. John Richmonds, a

Methodist missionary.

“The time will come, though you and I may not live to realize it,” he told the crowd, “when these hills and valleys will have become peopled by our free and enterprising countrymen.

“When younger towering mountain looks down upon magnificent cities, fertile farms and smoking factories, the future will be theirs,” he said.

The snowmelts on the mountains and the rivers run full down to the sea.

The waters race fast past the factories, the lumber mills, the school and houses; it slips past the church and laughs as it plunges under the bridges made for the footsteps of man.

The salmon pushes its body up the streams to spawn and regenerate.

The little house on the prairie is but the memory of a rich past.

Lakewood is full grown and the words of the missionary ring true.

The future is theirs.

### ***Help the Lakewood Historical Society***

Volunteers are needed in many areas. Please call: 253-682-3480

Your experience and willingness to help is needed.

**LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM  
MUSEUM FUND CONTRIBUTORS  
April 24, 2008**



**Lakewood History Museum**

*Thank You,  
Museum Fund  
Donors and Sponsors*  
**Gifts: \$26,472**

Goal: \$100,000 by July 31, 2009  
for Operations, Education, Exhibits,  
Programs and Community Outreach

**City of Lakewood Lodging Tax**  
supports museum promotions

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FUND DONORS**

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**Extended Traveling Exhibits  
on display thru June 2008**

***When Washington  
was Oregon***

Before the United States Congress created the Washington Territory in 1853, the newly formed Oregon Provisional Government established eight pioneering counties north of the Columbia River. As Americans rushed into Oregon Country, Great Britain's influence gradually diminished. This exhibit tells the story of clashing empires struggling to dominate a rich and fertile region. It looks at the lasting effects on the Native people and the settlers that made Washington a territory.

Reproductions of fascinating maps and images of rare documents and artifacts illustrate this explosive period of Washington history. This exhibit is presented by the Washington State Historical Society.

Northwest Treaty Trail: 1854-1856

In just 13 months between 1854 and 1856, Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens held 11 treaty councils with Northwest Indians. Native people ceded portions of their homelands, from Puget Sound to Canada and from northeastern Oregon to the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana.

**LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FINANCIAL REPORT  
March 31, 2008**

<b>Cash on Hand</b>	<b>02/29/2008</b>	<b>12/31/2007</b>
Checking	\$ 796.03	\$ 2414.68
Money Market	\$ 7318.41	\$10,260.29
Certificate of Deposit	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Total	\$ 8114.44	\$12,674.97

<b>Income</b>	<b>March 2008</b>	<b>3 Months 2008 YTD</b>
Grants	\$10,944.17	\$23,253.54
Memberships	\$ 705.00	\$ 2000.00
Donations - Museum Fund	\$ 1547.00	\$ 2907.00
Sponsorships	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Special Fund Raisers	\$ 0.00	\$ 2100.00
Bank Interest	\$ 18.40	\$ 100.63
Other	<u>\$ 247.23</u>	<u>\$ 285.23</u>
Total Income	\$13,461.80	\$30,646.40

<b>Expenses</b>		
Operations & Administration	\$ 435.04	\$ 1446.10
Web site	\$ 35.00	\$ 105.00
Contract Services	\$ 0.00	\$ 6615.00
Insurance	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Museum lease	\$2000.00	\$ 6000.00
Museum exhibits	\$ 770.30	\$ 3524.01
Postage, copies & printing	\$ 167.55	\$ 971.72
Museum Annual Fund	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Special Fund Raiser	\$ 0.00	\$ 1000.00
Marketing/Publicity	\$1290.00	\$ 6781.19
Other	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$4697.89	\$26,443.02

<b>Closing Cash on Hand 3/31/2008</b>		
Checking	\$ 1332.37	\$ 1332.37
Money Market	\$15,545.98	\$15,545.98
Certificate of Deposit	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Total	\$16,878.35	\$16,878.35

*Prepared 04/01/2008*

# ***Lakewood Historical Society Future Programs***

May 20 - Historic Home tour at the Griggs home, 6816 79th St W, off John Dower Road. Home was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Members only (and invited guests) event. Program starts at 7pm. Carpooling is recommended.

June 17 - *Revitalization of the Historic Barns at Fort Steilacoom Park*. Presenters: Senator Mike Carroll and Lakewood Councilman Walter Neary. Lakewood Library at 7 pm.

Questions about these upcoming programs? Contact Shannon Krueger 253-579-3249 or Becky Huber 253-582-8682

## **Do you have items of historical significance?**

*The Lakewood Historical Society is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Gifts to the society are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please contact the museum if you have questions or want to consider making a contribution.*

**6211 Mount Tacoma Dr SW, Lakewood, WA 98498      253-682-3480**

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