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 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 80th 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.
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 1st at Lakewold. 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 advertising 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 21st 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. Lloyde Alton.

“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.

“Lloyd 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 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.

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.

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
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 replaced 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 solder 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 snowmelt 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.
LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM
MUSEUM FUND CONTRIBUTORS
April 24, 2008

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

NEW MUSEUM FUND DONORS
Helen Amsbary
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Martha K. Bargren
Dimmer Family Foundation
Mac and Bette Kirk
Brad and Liz MacGowan
Mary L. Peterson Family
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Cynthia M. Spieth
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Paktex Inc (In-Kind)
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Delores Bloch
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Linda Forkenbrock
Sandra Godfrey
Ray and Janice Graves
Brad Jones
Hank Kaihara
Joseph Lewis
James Manning
Dave and Lindy O’Keeffe
Wilma and Lawrence Peterson
Marc and Brenda Rix
John and Melanie Simpson
Adele Stevens
Johnny and Lucinda Williams

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.
# LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## FINANCIAL REPORT

March 31, 2008

### Cash on Hand

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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.


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

Lakewood Historical Society
POBox 98014
Lakewood, WA 98496