

# Prairie Gazette

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, 2007



## The Colonial Center: 70 years on

Introduction by Becky Huber

**“You Name it? Lakewood —? What shall we name this paper? Send us your title and win \$10 cash or Theatre tickets”**

This was the heading for the first issue of the first weekly Lakewood newspaper published by Henzell and Mann on July 16, 1937. The winning title was “Lakewood Log”. Other names not chosen included Lakewood Bugle, District Honk and Prairie Gazette (now used for the LHS’s Newsletter).

The winner no doubt spent their prize money (\$10 bought quite a lot in those days) in the newly opened shops and services of the Lakewood Community Center, set in the hub of the beautiful Lakes District, and offering something for every family member. Later called the Colonial Center, it was the brain child of Norton Clapp and was the first shopping center built west of the Mississippi. Famous for the Lakewood Theater and the Lakewood Terrace Restaurant, the Center also had an array of shops and services that were essential to the community. The following excerpts from the article entitled “Ma, Pa, and the Kids” appeared on the front page of the Log’s first edition. We’d like to thank Betty Gallagher for the article.

Article by Betty Gallagher

Harry M. Rowen, owner of the Lakewood Super Market, proudly affirmed to residents and surrounding districts, the excellence of the goods in his store at “city prices” (normally prices were higher outside of the city). These included ‘air conditioned fruits and vegetable stands’ as well as the innovation of ‘baby carriages’ to tote the purchases and thus ease the arms of the ladies (few men shopped for groceries in those pre-lib days). The prices of items included Tomatoes, 2 lbs for 15c, Butter, 1 lb for 35c, Eggs, a dozen for 27c (those were the days, my friend!) The Lakewood Pharmacy, managed by E.P. Ross, modeled on a New England apothecary, lured the shoppers to the fountain counter for a quick thirst quencher. Should they prefer a window seat, a semi-circular bar set in a wide bay window allowed them to judge capricious Northwest them to venture outside the second floor. There, in the newly-of Beauty”, skillful their techniques to the well-being of the modern of Agnes McGregor machines were put into use: body machines for reducing and body toning; hair dryers; permanent wave machines; and many other contrivances that assisted the optimistic march towards achieving the “body beautiful”.

**Did you know?**

The 1951 expansion project turned the Colonial Center into the only shopping center in the country that was serviced entirely from an inside court.

whether the weather allowed or make their way to

dubbed “Conquest operators applied personally enhance customer. The most

Now it was time for the whole family to relax at the Lakewood Theater. Its décor compared to that of Radio City Music Hall in New York City, offered the latest movies from Hollywood. It was a place Ma and Pa could stretch their legs after working in the yard without having to get dressed up.

## Norton Clapp: The man behind Lakewood’s Colonial Center

The Lakewood Colonial Center was just one of the many building projects and business enterprises of Washington industrialist Norton



Clapp. One of the five original investors in Seattle’s Space Needle, Clapp was also involved with a number of notable real estate projects in the Puget Sound

area, including the 17-story Norton Building (named for Clapp’s grandfather) in downtown Seattle in 1959. But Norton Clapp was known for much more than his real estate investments.

Norton Clapp, born 1906, grew up in Pasadena, California in a family with significant investments in the Weyerhaeuser Corporation. As a teenager, he followed his father around on his business trips. He began investing in railroad shares while still in college, as stocks were riding high in the late 1920’s. When he graduated from the University of Chicago in June 1929, Clapp decided it would not be safe to carry the certificates (which were now quite valuable) back home to Pasadena with him. Shortly before leaving Chicago, he ordered his broker to sell. “So they sold it for me at a nice profit, and the whole market dropped and I became a hero because I didn’t know how to ship it west,” he said. “So that’s how I started my career.”

Beginning his career in a Tacoma law office, Norton Clapp



## Lakewood Historical Society

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Becky Huber • 253-582-8682

E-mail [craftyhubers@comcast.net](mailto:craftyhubers@comcast.net)

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Janda Volkmer • 253-222-7941

E-mail: [jandavolkmer@msn.com](mailto:jandavolkmer@msn.com)

### 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)

### Editor

Hayden Mackley • 253.584.5518

[hayden\\_mackley@hotmail.com](mailto:hayden_mackley@hotmail.com)

### Designer/Photographer

Ed Kane

## President's Message

I hope everyone had a great summer. It was nice to come back from traveling in the Midwest to our relatively cool weather and low humidity. Our gardens and yards have appreciated the rainfall keeping them lush and green.

This is the time of year when "all good citizens (members) come to aid of their Party (Society)". Our Nominating Committee would like for any member interested in becoming more involved with the Society to consider a position on the Board or membership on a committee. We have had a significant increase in membership and know that we have very motivated people who would like to participate in a more active way. Please let me or Walter Neary, the Nominating Committee Chairman, know if you are interested.

It is also the time we look back on our accomplishments of the last year and forge ahead with new goals. When we approved the new Bylaws last year we moved our Annual Meeting to October. (See details elsewhere in the newsletter.) We are fortunate to have reserved Prairie Hall at Little Church on the Prairie for the event. I encourage all of our members to attend, this is **your** Society and we want to make sure that we are meeting **your** objectives and supporting **your** interests.



## Lakewood History Museum

6211 Mount Tacoma Drive SW

253.682.3480

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

### Museum Hours:

12 to 4 pm, Wednesdays through Saturdays

Closed Major Holidays

Group tours arranged by appointment

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## Colonial Center, from page 1

As it was nearing time for an evening meal, everyone naturally took themselves to the nearby Lakewood Terrace for a pick-up meal at the Snack Shop or if they preferred, a more formal dinner in the Dining Room, where they could enjoy the delicious menu planned by Emily Taggart, and a marvelous view of 'our' Mountain, provided by Mother Nature.

After this thoroughly enjoyable day was spent indulging in the amenities of the Community Center, the contented and satisfied citizens of Lakewood head for home. They have found everything for which they came looking. The Center has lived up to its reputation and met all their needs.

A major addition to the original Center was completed in 1951 and an

expansion of the East Buildings across the street in 1955 added more services to a booming community. Sadly, very little is recognizable from the original Lakewood Community Center (now the Lakewood Colonial Center) except for the building itself. Saddest of all is the abandoned Lakewood Theater and Lakewood Terrace where there is only a ghostly echo of the past vibrancy left.

Many of the spaces are vacant and only small businesses are located here. Even

the Chamber of Commerce moved out last year!

However, when the LHS was looking for its first "home" last year, there was no question that we wanted to occupy one of the spaces for our first "storefront" Lakewood History Museum. We have added a small part of "reviving" the past glory of this historic Lakewood landmark in celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Please come and visit the Museum.

Our Fall Hours are Wed-Sat, 12-4p.m.

### Did you know?

Industrialist Norton Clapp was inspired to build the Colonial Center in a colonial style of brick with white trim after a trip to the East Coast. He fell in love with the timeless architecture of a small-town courthouse and decided his new project would carry that style to Lakewood.

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## Norton Clapp, from page 1

soon turned to business ventures, from a cemetery to a gold mine, to an effort to market a new electric iron. After the building of the Lakewood Community Center (later the Colonial Center), he joined his father in Weyerhaeuser and became corporate secretary of the forestry giant. Clapp served in the Navy during World War II, and when his father died in 1947, he replaced him as a director of Weyerhaeuser, as well as directorships on the boards of an array of other Northwest lumber companies.

Clapp was president of Weyerhaeuser between 1960 and 1966, overseeing nation- and world-wide expansion of the company. During this time he also helped finance the building of the Seattle Space Needle. When King County Council refused to pay for the construction of the Needle for the 1962 World Fair, Norton Clapp and four other investors stepped in to put up the money. Clapp was proud of his association with the iconic addition to Seattle's skyline, but he grumbled that whenever anyone had a bad meal in the revolving

restaurant at the top, he heard about it.

After stepping down from his position in Weyerhaeuser, he settled into life on a five-acre estate in Medina with his second wife Evelyn Gardner (mother of Booth Gardner, governor of Washington from 1985 to 1993). While he served as director of Safeco and of Seattle First National Bank, he devoted considerable energy to philanthropy, particularly through the Medina Foundation. Clapp was also heavily involved in the Boy Scouts, having been a scout in Pasadena and a scoutmaster of Troop 37 in Tacoma. In 1971, he was elected national president of the Boy Scouts of America, a position that took him all over the country.

Another of Norton Clapp's interests was the University of Puget Sound, serving as a trustee for 62 years, including 19 years as chairman of the board. He donated funds as well as time to the school, and the Norton Clapp Theatre in Jones Hall on the UPS campus honors his many contributions.

Clapp served as a patriarchal figure in his large and extended family, although reputedly he could be remote in dealing with people who were closest to him. Some friends and family members speculated that he built up a certain reserve as a result of the large number of personal tragedies that he experienced. His mother was killed in a car accident when he was scarcely 13, and he also survived the deaths of two of his four wives, three of his six children and a step daughter. His response to each of these losses was to throw himself into his work, distracting himself first with his studies and then with a daunting array of business, philanthropic, and civic activities.

Clapp died at his home in Medina in 1995, at age 89. A shrewd investor and a hard worker, by the time he died he had amassed a fortune estimated by Fortune magazine to be about \$450 million, making him one of the wealthiest people in the United States at that time.



**Note: New Museum Hours**  
**Effective September 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**Hours for 2007-2008**  
**12-4 pm, Wednesday-Saturday**  
 Closed major holidays  
**New docents welcome and**  
**needed!**  
 Contact Docent Chairperson  
 Edie Brewer, 253.588.4650

**Thanks to Docent Volunteers**

We have a great team of docent volunteers who make a significant contribution to the Historical Society and History Museum all year long. Our Docent Team Members rank high in that vaulted group of stars who have consistently been there to open the doors, welcome our visitors and tell our Lakewood story.

We will be honoring our docents this fall at a docent "tea" to let

them know how grateful we are for their dedication and support. Watch for your invitation next month.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

It's never too late to join the Museum team! Can you be a museum docent once a month to guide visitors through the displays? What about helping with reminder calls or mailings? Could you help research exhibit topics or build exhibits? What are your special interests and skills? We would be glad to have your help. Please call the museum and join the fun.

**Happy Anniversary to Us**

Can you believe it? This September-October issue of the Prairie Gazette is closing in on the first anniversary of the opening of the Lakewood History Museum. While at

times it seems that our progress is slow, the Society has actually accomplished quite a lot since the beginning of 2006 when the concept of a museum was still a talking point. If you haven't visited the Museum in recent months, interesting new exhibits are being created as new artifacts, memorabilia, photos, maps and historical documents come our way.

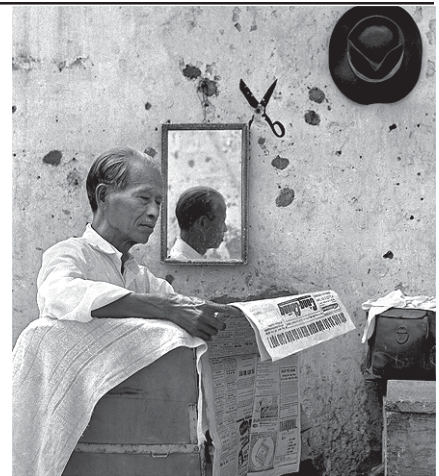
We are still early in the collecting stage of items for the museum exhibits and research library. As the fall season rolls around, if you are doing any clearing out or downsizing, please remember the Museum, especially if you have items that pertain to Lakewood history or reflect lifestyles from the past, including more recent history like the '50s-80s (that's 25-50 years ago even if it seems recent to many of us!). Items such as yearbooks, photos, sheet music, play programs, menus, knick-knacks and the like add visual interest to period exhibits.

**Lakewood Historical Society invited to exhibit opening**

What: **Saigon 67**, a forty year, forty image photographic retrospective exhibit.  
 When: Reception held October 5, 2007 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.  
 Exhibition runs October 5 to October 31, 2007  
 Where: Friends Gallery (reception in the Library's meeting room)  
 Lakewood Library  
 6300 Wildaire Rd. SW.  
 Lakewood, WA 98498

Historical Society member and photographer Ed Kane invites you to a retrospective photographic exhibition at the Friends gallery in the Lakewood Library, featuring photos of Saigon and its people in 1967.

Taken while Ed was serving in Vietnam as combat photographer and film cameraman with the 69<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, these photos show a city and its people living life seemingly oblivious to the threat of war. The Tet Offensive was still three months away, an event which would change everything and bring combat operations down the main street to the doorstep of the nation's capitol building. Through the windows of these photographs, you will see the characters of these people shining through as they work and play in the streets and waterways of Saigon. While the unpopularity of the war led Ed to file away his photos after his return from Vietnam, the images recently resurfaced and are now being shown in a gallery setting for the first time, forty years on. The exhibit will open with a reception held at 7pm on October 5 in the Library's meeting room.



## Newest Acquisitions

### Lakewood gets its own Post Office

Thanks to Gary Fowler for his vigilance in spotting an unusual auction ad, and to Sam Brown for a generous donation to make the purchase possible, we are now the proud owners of two “banks” of early 1900s brass post office boxes, a postal clerk’s stool, a wood hand truck, two 1920-40 era typewriters, an old steel stapler and a large, unique brass teapot.

The items came from the recently closed US Post Office Museum formerly located in the downtown Tacoma Post Office on A Street. Several items in the collection reportedly went to the Washington State Historical Society, with the remainder being placed up for bid.

This is a fitting addition to the Lakewood History Museum’s collection as several of the small hamlets that dotted the prairie from the 1850s-1940s, eventually coalescing to become known as Lakewood, were founded around the extension of a rail or trolley line and a small, rural post office station. This history will be included in the new display.

The collection is in honor of Emil Auer, a friend of Sam Brown’s, and who was a longtime supporter and nearly daily docent in the downtown Post Office Museum at 11th and A Street. We are now looking for additional items that will complement a “post office” display so please keep the museum in mind if you have, or know of, items that would fit in. Gifts of artifacts and memorabilia are tax-deductible.



### Can You Help?

Examples of items needed for exhibits on postal services, early schools and early or long-time businesses include:

- Old post cards or letters in stamped envelopes
- Hand cancellation or rate stamps
- Green eye shade, old rimless eyeglasses
- Wall calendars, posters, mottos
- Photos, paintings (e.g., George Washington?)
- Old school type wall clock
- Globe, maps, pointer stick,

### Museum Office Wish List

Shredder

Magazine boxes

Table-top compact mat cutter

Letter size hanging files & file folders

### Tools and equipment to keep on site

Vacuum Cleaner

Tool box

Hand tools, e.g., screwdrivers, pliers, nail punch, level, clamps, pry bar, etc.;

Electric hand tools

Heavy duty extension cords

**Lakewood Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.**

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**LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM**  
**2007 YTD MUSEUM FUND CONTRIBUTORS (\*New contributors since last issue )**



**Lakewood History Museum**

**Funds (5/15 - 8/15): \$14,265**  
**Goal:** \$100,000 by July 31, 2008 for Operations, Education, Exhibits, Programs and Community Outreach

**City of Lakewood Lodging Tax**  
 Grant funds help support museum promotional publications.

**SPONSORS**

- Comcast
- The Business Examiner
- Robi's Camera
- SIGNsations
- Water Rights Inc

*Thank You, Museum Fund Donors and Sponsors*

**PREMIER - \$1000 or more**

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- The Dimmer Family Foundation
- Rebecca and John Huber
- J. S. Martinac

**PATRON - \$500 to \$999**

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**LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FINANCIAL REPORT  
July 31, 2007**

<b>Cash on Hand 6/30/2007</b>	
Checking	\$2178.87
Money Market	\$5628.58
CD (due 7/14/07)	\$5095.63
Total	\$12,903.08
<b>Income for the Month of July</b>	
Memberships	\$ 275.00
Donations - Museum Fund	\$1225.00
Bank Interest	\$ 31.68
Other	\$ 0.00
Total Income	\$1531.68
<b>Expenses for the month of July</b>	
Administration	\$ 199.32
Insurance	\$ 747.00
Museum lease	\$2000.00
Museum exhibits	\$ 60.56
Postage, copies & printing	\$ 332.11
Raffle (Airline Tickets)	\$ 920.58
Total Expenses	\$4259.57
<b>Cash on Hand 7/31/2007</b>	
Checking	\$1419.30
Money Market	\$8755.89
CD (due 7/14/07)	\$ 0.00
(\$5105.98 to Money Market 7/14/07)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,175.19</b>
<b>Accounts Payable</b>	
Lease payments at \$2000 per month	

All bills have been paid and are up to date including lease payment for August.

*Submitted to the Board of Directors 8/07/2007*

**Workshop**

**“Windows to the Past:  
Preserving and Restoring  
Vintage Windows”**



This workshop will be held on Saturday, October 13 at the Steilacoom Town Hall. Speakers will address the importance of preserving windows in historic structures. Stephen Mathison with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation will lead off the morning which will include topics of restoration, replication and the use of salvageable materials. Gene Grulich, an architect specializing in historic structures, will lead a panel of experts in the field as they discuss the topic. Exhibits and displays will be available for viewing.

The free workshop will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 12:15. After a lunch, not provided, town historic preservation experts will conduct a guided walking tour of key buildings in the town's historic district. For further information, please contact Steilacoom Preservation Officer, Jennifer Schreck, at (253) 581-1912 or Marianne Bull, (253) 584-9410. Sponsored by the Town of Steilacoom and the Steilacoom Preservation and Review Board.

**Annual Meeting Schedule Announced**  
Event will be held in historic Little Church on the Prairie

The Lakewood Historical Society's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM. We are fortunate this year to hold the event in Prairie Hall at the historic Little Church on the Prairie, 6310 Motor Ave SW, Lakewood, WA.

The activities will include election of new Officers and Directors, recognition of volunteers and retiring Board members and the Annual Report on the accomplishments of the Society. We will serve a special dessert from

Hess (German) Bakery kindly provided by Beverly Bills. Entertainment will be provided by the Memorie Singers, a local singing group accompanied by Jean Sienko featuring old standards, show tunes and popular music.

Mark your calendar now for this evening of fun, food and fellowship. Please be sure to RSVP when the special invitation is sent in late September. The meeting is free to members, and guests joining that night get \$5.00 off their 2007-2008 memberships.

## Program Topics for September

Our regularly scheduled program for Sept 18<sup>th</sup> has been cancelled. Instead we encourage you to attend this special event at Historic Ft Steilacoom.

“Ft Steilacoom Living History Immersion Event”

Sept 22, 9 AM-5 PM and Sept 23, 9 AM-3 PM

9601 Steilacoom BLVD SW, Lakewood, WA

(On the grounds of Western State Hospital)

For further information call 253-582-5838

or visit their web site: [www.fortsteilacoom.com](http://www.fortsteilacoom.com)

Reenactors will live and work as soldiers, officers, their wives and friends during the 1850's and 1860's. Docents will guide visitors through the buildings of Historic Ft Steilacoom. Tickets will be available at the Fort Interpretive Center in Quarters 4,

\$5.00 per adult and \$10.00 per family. Please park in Ft Steilacoom Park and use the crosswalk at the traffic light on Steilacoom Blvd. There is limited handicapped parking near the Fort buildings.

Walter Neary has agreed to provide a special guided tour of the Living History Event at

4 PM on Sat, Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>. He portrays the journalist, Charles Prosch, who will interview various participants to gain unique insights into the newsworthy events of the day to include Steilacoom's dream of becoming the next "San Francisco" and rumors of the impending War between the States. If this is your first time to Ft Steilacoom we encourage you to visit the other buildings prior to the tour. Meet at the Shelter with the Cannons next to the Interpretive Center at 4 PM after obtaining your tickets.

## Note:

### New Museum Hours

Effective

September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007-2008

12-4 pm, every week

Wednesday-Saturday

Closed major holidays

New docents welcome and

needed!

Contact Docent

Chairperson

Edie Brewer, 253.588.4650

## Help the Lakewood Historical Society

Volunteers needed in many areas. Please call today: 253.682.3480.

Your experience and willingness to help is needed



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Lakewood Historical Society

P.O. Box 98014

Lakewood, WA 98496