During its years of operation between 1912 and 1922, the Tacoma Speedway, located in Lakewood, hosted some of the big names of racing, rivaling the best in the world. The “Who’s Who” of races -- “Terrible” Teddy Tetzlaff, Earl Cooper, Barney Oldfield, among others -- left rubber on that track. Others left their lives. The grandstands closed in 1922, and the site is now home to Clover Park Technical College.

Lakewood’s Claim to Fame

“It was the most nationally known thing to happen to Lakewood and now no one knows about it,” said Dr. Wayne Herstad, Speedway historian Dr. Wayne Herstad, who has collected items relating to Tacoma Speedway for the past 40 years for a book he is writing about the track’s notable history. He has binders of photos and programs organized by year just waiting for someone to ask about his collection. "It was a great track. Everyone got into the act.”

The track was built by a group of Tacoma businessmen led by Arthur Pitchard, president of the Tacoma Automobile Association. They collected backers and built a five-mile, all-dirt track, which opened in 1912. The track ran around what is now Lakeview Avenue, where the grandstands stood, to Steilacoom Boulevard to Gravelly Lake Drive to 112th Street. The first races were held on July 5 and 6, 1912.

The track changed quickly in those first few years. It shrunk to a 3.5-mile course in 1913, then in 1914 to a two-mile track. The shorter course was roughly what is now Steilacoom Boulevard and Gravelly Lake Drive to 100th, then back to Lakiewie.

The grandstand shifted to Steilacoom Boulevard in 1914. A split board track replaced the dirt in 1915. The two-by-four planking was placed end-to-end -- not flat on the ground -- and the gaps between each board were stuffed with gravel to save on lumber. The track used 15 tons of 20-penny nails and took two million board feet. Track corners were banked

(Continued on page 7)
President’s Message

The last issue featured the 50th Anniversary of the Seattle World’s Fair. This issue highlights two other anniversaries, the centennial of the Tacoma Speedway and the 75th anniversary of the Lakewood Colonial Center. Be sure to read these special articles written by Steve Dunkelberger and Nancy Covert.

The Special Event Committee has been very busy coordinating our next fund raising event being held on July 22nd to celebrate the Centennial of the Tacoma Speedway. See the event details elsewhere in this issue. I know a number of you will not be able to attend the event, so we have several other activities planned that will give you an opportunity to learn more about this fascinating part of our local history. Also, the Tacoma Speedway commemorative coin is available for only $10 each. Visit the Museum or call 253-682-3460 to get your coin today.

Another article in this issue I urge you to read is about the 9/11 Reflection Park that West Pierce Fire and Rescue (formerly Lakewood Fire Department) is planning at their station in University Place. They were honored to receive an artifact from New York and the dedication of the park is scheduled for September 11th, 2012.

Yours Sincerely.

Becky Huber

We are especially pleased with the Speedway poster designed and created by Chuck Mathias, a retired Pierce Transit marketing specialist who lives in Steilacoom. The black and white image in the newsletter doesn’t do it justice. For it to be appreciated, you must see it in color. We have them displayed at the Museum and at various local businesses. We have extra posters and flyers that you are welcome to pick up to distribute to places you frequent.

Another major accomplishment is the launching of our new website! Please take a few minutes to visit www.lakewoodhistorical.org.

Even if you don’t have a computer, it is worth asking a friend or relative to help you view it. We want your input on how we can improve it and make suggestions on content. This is our “front door” to the world that goes way beyond Lakewood and the Pacific Northwest.

I’d like to thank Stephen Neufeld for assisting us in getting this accomplished. I’d also like to thank Adam Welch and Waymond Hampton from Hemisphere Design, our webhosts who have been with us since 2006. The “new look” is a result of input from our Society board and others and we have attempted to create an appealing site that encourages visitors to stay longer. If they only have a few minutes, we have placed the pertinent features on the “home page” so they get the details for Events, Exhibits and News at a glance.

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

Newsletter Editor: Stephen Neufeld
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Mayo, Class of ’92, Clover Park High School and Tim, Class of ’66 from Lakes High School, are the children of Dr Robert Marsh, who served as Chief Dental Officer at the American Lake VA Hospital.

The Clapps were inspired by the architecture of colonial America when they visited New England. The rest of the complex was completed in 1951, and the East Building across the street was built in 1955. Thanks to Brian Kamens from the Northwest Room of the Tacoma Public Library for providing assistance to LHS Researcher Nancy Covert for this information. Details below were found inside a manila file folder that contained scraps of faded, yellowing clippings from the July 9, 1937 edition of the Tacoma News Tribune:

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The Lakewood History Museum News

Recent Donations

The Collections Committee is pleased to have received several fascinating items donated from former Lakewood residents.

Edie Brewer’s daughter, Jan Taylor (photo above), brought in a beautiful footstool made by Edie’s great grandfather, Clinton DeWitt Davison, at his furniture factory on Chambers Creek. Edie, who died in February, 2012 at the age of 88, was a charter member of the Society and Little Church on the Prairie.

She also donated a complete set of William Bonney’s History of Pierce County, Washington, a reprint of the 1927 edition, and plat maps of her family’s home on Ponce de Leon Creek, near the Lakewood Towne Center on Gravelly Lake Drive.

West Pierce Fire and Rescue Plans

“9/11 Reflection Park”

Did you know?

The Lakewood History Museum is open Wednesday-Saturday Noon to 4 pm!

6211 Mt Tacoma Dr SW

Lakewood, WA 98499

253-682-3480

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By Nancy Coyert

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Not a bad idea, and a good circulation booster for this four-page local weekly. That summer in 1937 Editor and Publisher Charles F. Mann, a graduate of Steilacoom Grade School grabbed his reader’s attention with a headline that read:

The Lakewood Log

As the publisher explained in a two-column story near the top of the paper: “When we started to pick a title for this newspaper we soon ran into so many likely names, most of them built around the name “Lakewood” that to save our lives we couldn’t decide on the final, catchy, descriptive second word for our masthead.

Accordingly, we’re asking all our readers to get busy and jot down a few suggestions and mail them in.

MAIL, WE SAID—because we can’t acknowledge names given to us as we roll by in our Jilloppy (sic) or phoned to the Society Editor at the odd hour.

We thought that a title like “Scotch Broom” (because we aim to scrape the prairies clean for news and still keep within a tight budget)—or the Prairie Gazette, or the Lakewood Bugle, or the District Honk or something else befitting our initial venture into exhibits as well as Society outreach may be the Scratch-gravel Weekly Chronicle might do, but something somebody would be sure to slap our ears down for being flippant about our thin black prairie soil that just never seems to get enough water or fertilizer to produce a nice crop.

We did think of the Hudson’s Bay Review in honor of the first cultivators and settlers of the Lake area, or perchance use General Grant’s name in honor of the first military venture into the area. But, as we say, it’s a tough problem to find a name, in our waggish moment this morning, the idea of a Psychopath’s (sic) or Pachiatric (sic) Nightmare hit us in honor of our two biggest institutions, but then we felt that skilled hands and minds could give their charges more channels of self-expression than we could possibly offer, SO-O-O-F---UP TO OUR READERS. Won’t you give us a lift on this ???

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The Lakewood Log was published 1937 to 1961 when it merged with the Suburban Press. It then became the Tacoma/Suburban Times, owned by Dave Sclair, and then it was renamed the Lakewood Press. From 1988-2000 it was called the Lakewood Journal. Former Suburban Times publisher Ed Kane operated a monthly community newspaper, the Lakewood Community Journal, from 2001-03. (The name is ironic since it was one of the early suggestions for the Log).

Comment: In March 2007, the "Prairie Gazette," one of the other proposed names for the Lakes District paper, was chosen for the "newspaper" you are now reading, the monthly newsletter for the Lakewood Historical Society. The "Prairie Chimes" is the monthly newsletter for Little Church on the Prairie.
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By Nancy Covent

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West Pierce Fire and Rescue Plans

“9/11 Reflection Park”

By Ken Sharp, Chief West Pierce Fire & Rescue

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Yours Sincerely,

Becky Huber

(Continued from page 1)

16 feet to provide for faster turns. But the track had constant problems with splinters and gravel shooting into cars behind the lead car and popping tires. “There was a saying that all board tracks were awful, and then there was Tacoma,” Herstad said.

The track went patriotic during the war years of 1918 and 1919. The famous Indianapolis race track shut down because of World War I patriotism, but the Tacoma course stayed open and ran “Liberty sweepstakes,” with cars flying all the flags of the united forces against Germany.

The Last Races

After that, the grand days of the track were short lived. The stands burned down in 1920. The fire was ruled an arson. The track had no insurance. It was the only Class A track besides the one in Indianapolis, and its grandstands were now cinders.

“They thought that was the end of the races,” Herstad said. “But they somehow pulled together enough money and started again.”

The new grandstands partially covered the seats following a fire that had burned the old ones to the ground. The fire ruled an arson, but the track was still losing money. Its last year of racing was 1922.

The last car race at the track was held July 4. The first multiple Indy race winner, Tommy Milton, had won on Tacoma’s track in 1920 and 1921 and came in second in 1922 to Jimmy Murphy. Milton did pretty good for a man with only one eye. He had been blind in one eye since childhood. The waving of the checkered flag that day marked the end of racing at the track.

The track officially shut down at the end of the year, a victim of falling gate receipts.

From Race Cars to Airplanes to Education

Aviators found that the grassy oval inside the racetrack made a great landing field. The massive 4 x 10 posts used to frame the grandstands were later incorporated into a barn in Pierce County. Tacoma Speedway researcher Dr. Wayne Herstad also has sections of them in his basement. They are easily identifiable as being from the grandstand because the V-shaped notches on their ends match perfectly the V-shaped notches shown in photos of the grandstands.

The flat grassland eventually was built out as part of the Mueller-Harkins Airport. A letter signing over the Tacoma Speedway site to the airport backer calls for a $250 down payment. The City of Tacoma used the airstrip as Tacoma Municipal Airport for a time, and national air shows were held there until World War II. The federal government then seized the property for use in the war effort. The seizure dispute wasn’t settled until 1944. The site served as the U.S. Navy’s Pacific Naval Advance Base before shifting over to the state for use as an industrial park.

The land was approved for use as a technical school in 1962. Part of the track land around what is now the corner of Lakewood Drive and Steilacoom Boulevard became part of the hangar for an airfield that was used as an airplane test field for Clover Park Technical College.

This edited article was written by Steve Dunkelberger for HistoryLink.org in 2004. He also published an article on the Tacoma Speedway for Columbia: The Magazine of Northwest History, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 2008).

75th Anniversary of Colonial Center

(Continued from page 6)

“Construction of a community center building, catering to the needs of lake communities south of the city had been started Saturday. The building, to be designed in an American renaissance or colonial style, will extend 300 feet along the Steilacoom Lake Boulevard and 100 feet along the Gravelly Lake Drive. It will be a two-story structure with a partial basement.

The Center also included a pharmacy, market, barber shop, recreation room (below the theater) and the office for the Lakewood Log. Editor/publisher Charles Mann wrote about the happenings from Lakewood and Steilacoom.
During its years of operation between 1912 and 1922, the Tacoma Speedway, located in Lakewood, hosted some of the big names of racing, rivaling the best in the world. The “Who’s Who” of races -- “Terrible” Teddy Tetzlaff, Earl Cooper, Barney Oldfield, among others -- left rubber on that track. Others left their lives. The grandstands closed in 1922, and the site is now home to Clover Park Technical College.

Lakewood’s Claim to Fame
“It was the most nationally known thing to happen to Lakewood and now no one knows about it,” said Dr. Wayne Herstad

Speedway historian Dr. Wayne Herstad, who has collected items relating to Tacoma Speedway for the past 40 years for a book he is writing about the track’s notable history. He has binders of photos and programs organized by year just waiting for someone to ask about his collection. “It was a great track. Everyone got into the act.”

The track was built by a group of Tacoma businessmen led by Arthur Pitchard, president of the Tacoma Automobile Association. They collected backers and built a five-mile, all-dirt track, which opened in 1912. The track ran around what is now Lakeview Avenue, where the grandstands stood, to Steilacoom Boulevard to Gravelly Lake Drive to 112th Street. The first races were held on July 5 and 6, 1912.

The track changed quickly in those first few years. It shrunk to a 3.5-mile course in 1913, then in 1914 to a two-mile track. The shorter course was roughly what is now Steilacoom Boulevard and Gravelly Lake Drive to 100th, then back to Lakeview.

The grandstand shifted to Steilacoom Boulevard in 1914. A split board track replaced the dirt in 1915. The two-by-four planking was placed end-to-end -- not flat on the ground -- and the gaps between each board were stuffed with gravel to save on lumber. The track used 15 tons of 20-penny nails and took two million board feet. Track corners were banked (Continued on page 7)