



Brairie Gazette



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SUMMER 2012

Tacoma Speedway 1912-1922

By Steve Dunkelberger

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

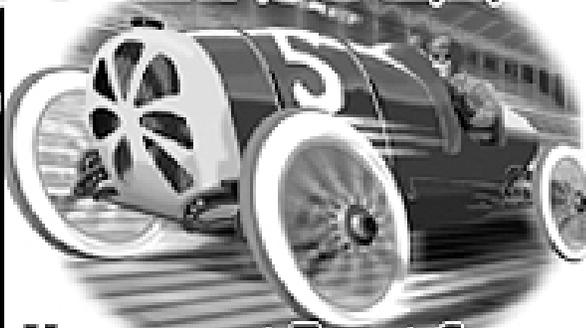


Dr. Wayne Herstad

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

A WALK INTO HISTORY AT THE TACOMA SPEEDWAY

SUN.
JULY
22
2012



5:00
TO
9:00
PM

Marymount Event Center

Spanaway, WA ~ Home of the LeMay Family Collection

Tickets: \$50 ea. Available at Lakewood History Museum,
6211 Mt. Tacoma Dr SW or call 253-682-3480 or
visit lakewoodhistorical.org

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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

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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 253-682-3480 to get your coin today.



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.

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

PRAIRIE GAZETTE

Prairie Gazette is the official publication of the Lakewood Historical Society. The newsletter is published four times a year. Distribution is directly to members and available at the Lakewood History Museum, 6211 Mt Tacoma Drive SW Lakewood, WA 98499. Phone: 253-682-3480

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

Newsletter Editor: **Stephen Neufeld**

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.



Johnnie C. Cawthon (photo below left) donated his father's Fairmont motor. Johnnie A. Cawthon, who died in 2006 at the age of 82, was a member of the Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association, often won awards and receiving recognition from engines in his collection.



In June, Society members, **Mayo Marsh**, from San Carlos, CA and her brother **Tim Marsh** (photo above) from McMinnville, OR, visited the Museum. They had lived in the Lakewood area in the 50's-60's. They toured the area visiting their high schools and other locations.

Mayo, Class of '62, 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. Tim has donated numerous items from his Lakes High School days, many of them were used in last year's Clover Park School District exhibit.

West Pierce Fire and Rescue Plans "9/11 Reflection Park"

By Ken Sharp, Chief
West Pierce Fire & Rescue

A few months ago, West Pierce Fire & Rescue was fortunate enough to acquire a rare artifact; a piece of the remains of the World Trade Center. They are now in the process of properly honoring and displaying this important piece of history in their 9/11 Reflection Park that will be built in front of

this fire station at 3631 Drexler Drive in University Place. An organized outreach program to civic groups, businesses, and other organizations is now underway, offering them an opportunity to be a part of this historic project.

Employees of West Pierce are playing a significant role in this project, including an opportunity to "sponsor" one or more of the 343 FDNY firefighters who perished in the twin towers. It's a personal connection between the West Pierce employees and those in the FDNY who sacrificed on 9/11. Once all the names are sponsored, these sponsorships will raise more than \$40,000.

As West Pierce Fire Chief Ken Sharp says, "This 9/11 Reflection Park offers a unique opportunity to build something meaningful, contribute something back to our community and to look back with our family and friends in the years to come at something that will forever commemorate and acknowledge our collective loss on 9/11."

A ceremonial groundbreaking of the park will occur on July 3rd. Substantial completion of the park and a formal dedication ceremony will occur on September 11th. Please feel free to visit the park website:

www.westpierce911park.org
and give serious consideration to becoming a part of this meaningful project.

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**

Thank You, Museum Fund Donors and Sponsors

2012 Goal: \$25,000 for Operations, Education, Exhibits, Programs and Community Outreach

Actual to date: \$10,477 from 64 generous donors

City of Lakewood Lodging Tax helps support the Lakewood History Museum displays & exhibits as well as Society community outreach, promotions and educational programs.

SPONSORS & BUSINESS MEMBERS

- AA Party Rentals
- B&B Glass
- Better Properties Real Estate
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- Cartridge World
- Comcast
- Gramor Development WA
- Harborstone Credit Union
- Heritage Bank
- Roger Jaenicke
- Lakewood Chamber of Commerce
- Lakewood Ford
- Lakewold Gardens
- LeMay Enterprises
- Les Schwab Tire Center
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- Patriots Landing
- Paktek Inc
- Puget Sound Energy
- Smith Western
- The Suburban Times
- Sound Transit
- The Helen & John Vogt Foundation
- Water Rights Inc

PREMIER - \$1,000 or more

- LTG (Ret) William (Bill) Harrison
- The Helen and John Vogt Foundation

PATRON - \$500 to \$999

- Comcast
- John and Rebecca Huber
- Mike & Sue Raney – Beverley Bills

PARTNER - \$200 to \$499

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- Horace Gamas
- Clyde and Jean Kalahan
- Clark and Sharon Montgomery

- Raye Staples
- David and Barbara Young

ASSOCIATE - \$100 to \$199

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- Ron and Christine Cronk
- George and Geneva Hamill
- Roger Jaenicke
- Mayo E. Marsh
- Tim Marsh
- Walter Neary
- Joan E. Shalikashvili
- Cynthia Spieth
- Glen and Marlene Spieth
- Larry and Darlene Wilder

Memorial gifts in Honor of:

- Bob Barlow
by Joe and Bernie Piscatella
- Edie Brewer
by John and Rebecca Huber
- Brian C. Davis
by Kristin E. Davis

Contributors

- Richard and Helen Bednarczyk
- Michael and HaeYon Brandstetter
- James and Linda Curley
- Rhona Diehl
- Katherine F. Desberg
- Jim and Lila Early
- Susan B. Fields
- Pearl (Billie) Finley
- Scott Gamas
- Joe and Carolyn Ghilarducci
- Sandra and Clarence Glasse
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- Thomas and Bonnie Wilson

- Stephen Whitlock & Virginia Castro Smith
- Carole and Ted Wier
- John and Dede Winters
- Harriet R. Wolverton

Honorary contributions:

Bill Harrison and Bob Brunke
In honor of their Community work
by Robert Warfield

LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2012 YTD thru June 15th

Opening Cash on Hand - January 1st, 2012

Checking	\$ 1,402.56
Money Market	<u>\$ 21,029.77</u>
Total	\$ 22,432.33

Income

Grants	\$ 23,619.87
Memberships	\$ 4,060.00
Donations – Museum Fund	\$ 4,727.00
Sponsorships	\$ 500.00
Memorials	\$ 250.00
Special Fund Raisers	\$ 583.00
Bank Interest	\$ 32.75
Other	<u>\$ 120.00</u>
Total Income	\$ 33,892.62

Expenses

Operations & Administration	\$ 2,536.64
Web Site	\$ 3,325.00
Contract Services	\$ 4,520.75
Insurance	\$ 1,280.00
Museum Lease	\$ 9,000.00
Museum Exhibits	\$ 414.92
Historical Markers	\$ 4,660.00
Postage, Copies & Printing	\$ 1,415.08
Special Events/Fund Raisers	\$ 5,660.32
Marketing/Publicity	<u>\$ 7,845.10</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 40,657.81

Closing Cash on Hand – June 15th, 2012

Checking	\$ 2,248.46
Money Market	<u>\$ 13,418.68</u>
Total	\$ 15,667.14

The Lakewood Log

By Nancy Covert

In mid-July 1937 a new publication appeared in the area. Pledging to provide news of the Lakes District, Steilacoom and DuPont, the paper's banner headline asked its potential subscribers:

"What shall we name this paper? Send us your title and win \$10 cash or Theater Tickets."

Not a bad deal, 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:



You Name It? Lakewood---??

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 rural journalism. Maybe 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 Pschiatric (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-O--it's UP TO OUR READERS.** Won't you give us a lift on this ???*

**Newspaper Trivia Time: The Scotch Broom, named in honor of the ubiquitous yellow weed, also was the name given to an early 1980s Bainbridge Island literary publication.*

In the second, still nameless, edition, Publisher Mann printed suggested names, telling his readers that one reader had "submitted 24 names: all different and never duplicated by others submissions." Some of those names included (each proceeded by the word, "Lakewood") Charmer, Informer, Rambler,

News, Broom, Prairieneer (sic), Chimes, Lake and Wood News, Echo and Record. Mann promised to publish the rest in the following edition.

Seventy additional suggested names were published in the July 23 edition, and Mann noted that Mayor Morris of Steilacoom would serve as one of five judges to select the winning name. Lee Merrill (an early promoter of the Daffodil Festival) also was a judge. Additional name choices included the Cackler, Off the Record, Tattler and Oak.

Single copy sales were probably very high for the July 30 issue when the name "Log" appeared for the first time, attached to "Lakewood". Mr. Rex Rutherford of Gravelly Lake, along with Ronald Nelson, Rosalle McKernon of Steilacoom, Irene Doten of Steilacoom Lake and Ira McDaniel of DuPont each had submitted the name "Log", but Rutherford's suggestion was postmarked first. Hence, Mr. Rutherford received the promised movie tickets.

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 photographer Ed Kane operated a monthly community paper, 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 quarterly newsletter for the Lakewood Historical Society. The **Prairie Chimes** is the monthly newsletter for Little Church on the Prairie.

75th Anniversary of the Lakewood Community (now Colonial) Center

By Nancy Covert

Almost every year is the anniversary for something. This past April the Society noted the 50th anniversary of the Seattle World's Fair-or Century 21, as it was known. This year the Society is commemorating the Centennial of the Tacoma Speedway for its major fund raising event in July.

2012 also marks the 75th anniversary of world and national events: for example: King George VI was crowned in 1937, following the abdication of his brother, Edward; American's most famous female pilot, Amelia Earhart, went missing during her attempt to complete a round-the-world flight; and the official opening of the renowned Golden Gate Bridge, crossing from San Francisco to the Peninsula.

In September 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt officially inaugurated Timberline Lodge at Mt. Hood, Oregon. The WPA project that provided work for hundreds of Oregon craftspeople (stone masons, weavers, artists) is marking its 75th anniversary this year.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Lakewood Colonial Center, only the second planned shopping center west of the Mississippi River. During the 1930s and 1940s, the area known as Lakewood was beginning to take on its own identity. As the Great Depression lifted, business development took off. In 1937, Norton Clapp built the first part of the Lakewood Community Center.



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:

“Lakewood Community Center—a city under one roof—modestly stood for its first inspection Tuesday night. More than 500 guests of Mr. and Mrs. Norton Clapp, builders of a commercial castle, which rivals Scotty's Palace in Death Valley, in splendor and comfort, were escorted through a private preview, climaxed by a world's premiere movie in the best little theatre in the West.

“The Center officially opens on Thursday (July 8, 1937), and clerks will be on hand Friday to receive customers. Construction is completed in all but a few minor spots. Tuesday's guests moved ticket-line style through every room in the building and exclamations of surprise and astonishment were both as audible and frequent as those heard at a Stadium Bowl firework show. Men exclaimed over the carpeting and tiled floors, plodding along with heads down, as men do, in the midst of loveliness the women praised the beauty of the walls, ceilings, furnishings and lights. Their heads were decidedly up.”

Known as the Lakewood Community Center—had its start a year earlier when an August 23, 1936 article announced the news in its pages: “New Theatre being built to serve Lakes District”. The center project is being sponsored by the Pasadena Co. in which Norton Clapp, Tacoma capitalist, is a large stockholder.



(Continued from page 1)

18 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 \$100,000 fundraiser, 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 strip 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, where editor/publisher Charles Mann wrote about the happenings from Lakewood and Steilacoom.



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

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~ *Programs and Events* ~
Summer 2012

Thursday, July 12th, 4-7 pm, ***Open House at Lakewood History Museum***, 75th Anniversary of the Lakewood Community (now Colonial) Center; debut of historic photos of Tacoma Speedway in Artist's Corner. Address: 6211 Mt. Tacoma Dr., Lakewood, WA

Sunday, July 22nd, 5-9 pm, ***Tacoma Speedway Centennial Celebration***, Marymount Event Center, Spanaway, WA. Tickets available at the Lakewood History Museum, 6211 Mt. Tacoma Dr. or call 253-682-3480!

Tuesday, August 21st, 7-9 pm, ***History of the Lakes in Lakewood***, presented by Kris Kauffman and Don Russell. St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW

Tuesday, September 18th, 7-9 pm, ***The Influence of the Korean Community in Lakewood's History***, presented by Lua Pritchard, former Director of Korean Women's Association and current Director of Asian Pacific Cultural Center. St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW

Remember, monthly meetings are held at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in the parish hall,
10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to the Lakewood Library.

*****Check out our website for more information and current events*****
www.LakewoodHistorical.org