

Prairie Gazette

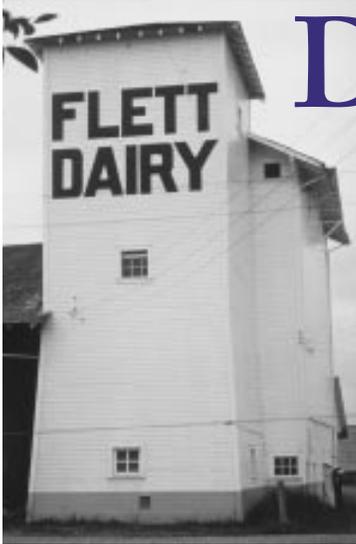


Fall 2017 The Official Publication of the Lakewood Historical Society

Museum: 6211 Mt. Tacoma Drive SW, Lakewood WA 98499

OPEN Wed-Sat, 12 Noon-4 pm

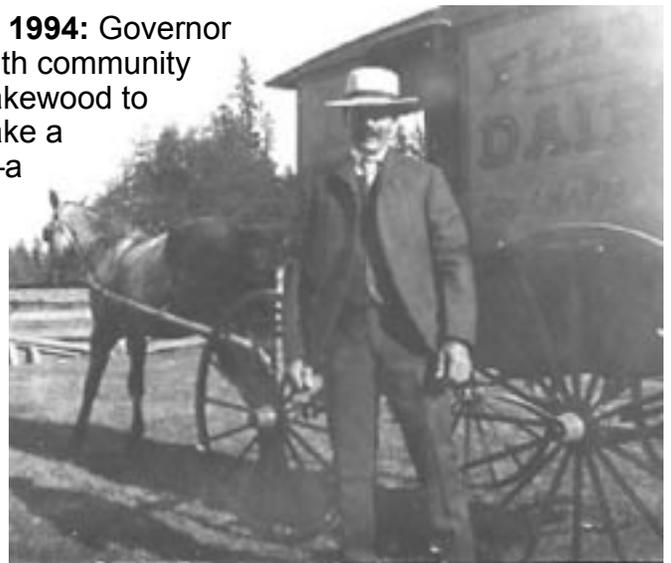
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Dairy to “Sanctuary”

State turns historic Flett farm into living environmental lab

Sunday, September 11, 1994: Governor **Mike Lowry** gathers with community leaders at Flett Creek in Lakewood to remember the past and make a commitment for the future—a 106-acre Natural Resources Laboratory and Research Park for Clover Park Technical College.



Tote that pail? Not anymore. “Accidental dairyman” George Chapman finds an easier way to deliver milk.

Today: Purchased with a \$2.75 million appropriation from the state Legislature, the park (across Steilacoom Boulevard from Clover Park Tech) allows people to explore the wetlands, grasses and urban watershed where Flett Dairy flourished for 91 years. Neighbors still recall being chased across the pasture by Flett Jerseys and Guernseys, but there have been no cows on the property since 1989. Five years later the dairy closed, ending production of its locally famous milk, buttermilk, cottage cheese and ice cream.

Both dairy and creek got the Flett name from a family that emigrated to North America from the Orkney Islands in the 1840’s. Among the first American-born members of that family was daughter **Annie Flett** who, among her other accomplishments, would one day buy herself a cow—a purchase the significance of which would only become apparent after she married **George Chapman** in 1895.

Ashamed, as their daughter **Ellen Freckleton** recalled years later, that his wife knew how to milk a

See FLETT, page 4



The Flett House, long-time Lakewood landmark.

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PRAIRIE GAZETTE

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The staff of Prairie Gazette actively encourages input from the Society's members as well as the general public regarding story ideas of 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 us on Facebook or our website for information on events and activities:

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

President's Message

Well, another summer has flown by. I hope you all got a chance to attend the Lakewood Farmers Market, or SummerFest, or the Lakewood Historical Society annual picnic on American Lake, or even a concert in the park in Steilacoom. But now the days are shorter and mornings cooler—mums, pumpkin spice lattes and football!

Unfortunately we said goodbye to our Museum Manager **Emma Pierce**. She recently got a full time job with the State of Washington, but fortunately Emma has agreed to stay on as a docent one Saturday each month. Emma did a great job in keeping our collections straightened out and bringing LHS up to date with Facebook, Instagram, etc.

In the meantime, the Annual Fund Campaign letter is being sent out to our Members and Friends. This is one of our major funding sources needed to maintain and continue the Society and Museum's growth. Please keep the Lakewood Historical Society in mind when you are planning your yearly giving.

We are continuing to plan programs for the rest of 2017 and for 2018. Some fun events coming up include a Command Performance of "A Christmas Carol" at the Lakewood Playhouse planned for December 14, and our 2018 calendar—a great gift! (See pg. 11) And we are planning another "Flapjack Fundraiser" at the Lakewood Applebees. We are also partnering with the Clover Park School District on their 90th anniversary 2017-2018; check their Facebook page *cloverparksd* for more information.



Thanks again for your continued support!

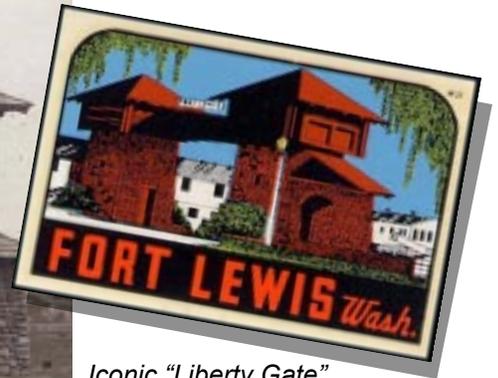
And **Go Hawks!!** *Sue Scott*



Steilacoom Chapter of The Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington Is Welcoming New Members.

If you can trace lineal descent in Washington prior to 1870, Oregon prior to 1853, Idaho or Montana prior to 1863 then we would love to hear from you. For more info call **Beth Julian, 360.943.7009**

2017: A Year to Remember for JBLM



Iconic “Liberty Gate” soon after it was built in 1917 (l.) and as a WW II era luggage sticker (above).



1917—America enters the Great War raging in Europe. Pierce County leaders, in a display of patriotism unmatched anywhere else in the country, donate thousands of acres to Uncle Sam for the construction of an army base.

In just 90 days, Camp Lewis rises from the prairie, a collection of hastily built barracks and support structures that grows into the vast Joint Base Lewis-McChord we know today.



Lieutenant Governor Cyrus Habib addresses crowd at Centennial Celebration.

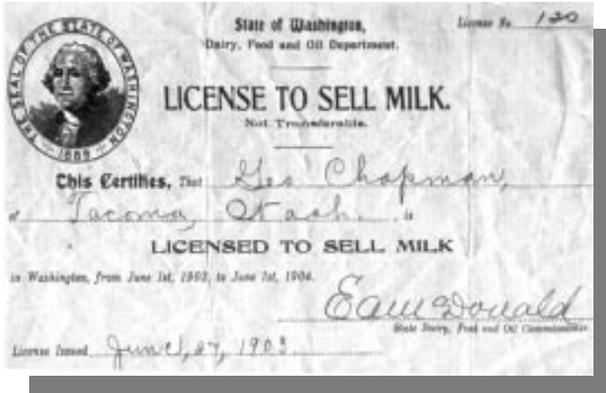


2017—August 18: Pomp, circumstance and a street fair mark the official Centennial Celebration. Further commemorations include the dedication of the Boulevard of Remembrance plaque and the re-opening of Lewis Army Museum (see pgs 8-9) on August 31. Housed in this historic structure (l.)—originally an inn for civilian visitors—the museum’s expanded and refurbished exhibits provide many a unique insight into our local and national military history.

FLETT from page 1

cow and he didn't, George not only mastered the art, he was soon sharing the result with fellow workers at the Northern Pacific car shops in Edison (today's South Tacoma).

Anybody with an empty pail could get their share of fresh squeezings from George's cows—at



no charge. Not surprisingly, the number of empty pails increased as word of his generosity spread—so much so that George was forced to quit walking to work with cans in hand. He bought a horse and wagon to haul both himself and his ever-increasing load of milk to the car shops.

Cows, horse, wagon, demand...? Suddenly, the light dawned.

“Father quit the car shops,” Ellen said, “and started buying cows, one at a time. He went from house to house in South Tacoma, selling milk.” In June of 1903, the state Dairy, Food and Oil (!) Department issued license No. 120 to George Chapman. That was the start of Flett Dairy.

“I remember ringing the brass dinner bell at lunch and dinner to bring the men in from the dairy across the creek from the house,” Ellen recalled, admitting, “I was a coward. If the cows were in stanchions, I was fine. But if they were in the pasture,



I was afraid of them.”

One day in 1909, **Robert Portman** came to the door. A Swiss farmer with a dairy in the nearby Oakland Addition, Portman wanted to add the Flett Dairy to his holdings. George Chapman agreed and the deal was made, with Portman to retain the already well-known Flett name.

Portman had only a few years to enjoy his new, larger operation, however, dying in 1913. His widow, **Mary B. Gratzer**, married one of the dairy's milkers, Swiss immigrant **Gottfried Fuchs**. Together they built Flett into one of Washington's biggest dairies.

Mary Fuchs died in 1966 leaving a \$4 million estate to the Gottfried and Mary Fuchs Foundation, established in 1960 to benefit Pierce County. Gottfried survived his wife by ten years, overseeing the “charitable, educational, scientific, literary or religious purposes” the foundation was created to support.

Though gone now for over twenty years, the location known over the years as Flett Station, Rigney Hill, Old Hilbury Farm, and the Daughtery Donation is still called Flett Dairy by many people, including some of the residents of the subdivisions popping up around the property like mushrooms.

In a natural progression from the days when schoolchildren took field trips to Flett Dairy, the property has become a haven for county school districts wishing to study environmental education.

Explosive growth in Pierce County over the last few decades has made what Clover Park official **Nancy**

White called the Flett property at its dedication in 1994 even more fitting today—a “sanctuary in the middle of the city.”

Be sure to visit the “Home on the Prairie” exhibit at Lakewood History Museum—we’ve added new photos and information about the Flett family.

6211 Mt Tacoma Drive SW • Wed-Sat, Noon to 4:00 pm





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THE FLETT FAMILY'S NORTHWEST SAGA



2



3



4

- 1. Flett farm, circa 1920.
- 2. Early Flett Dairy herd, 1930's
- 3. **Ellen Chapman Freckleton**, daughter of **George** and **Annie Chapman**, with "herding stick".
- 4. Herd of Flett Holsteins, 1964
- 5. Cute Jersey—Elsie's twin?
- 6. Holsteins await feeding in their stanchions—the only time young Ellen felt safe around them.

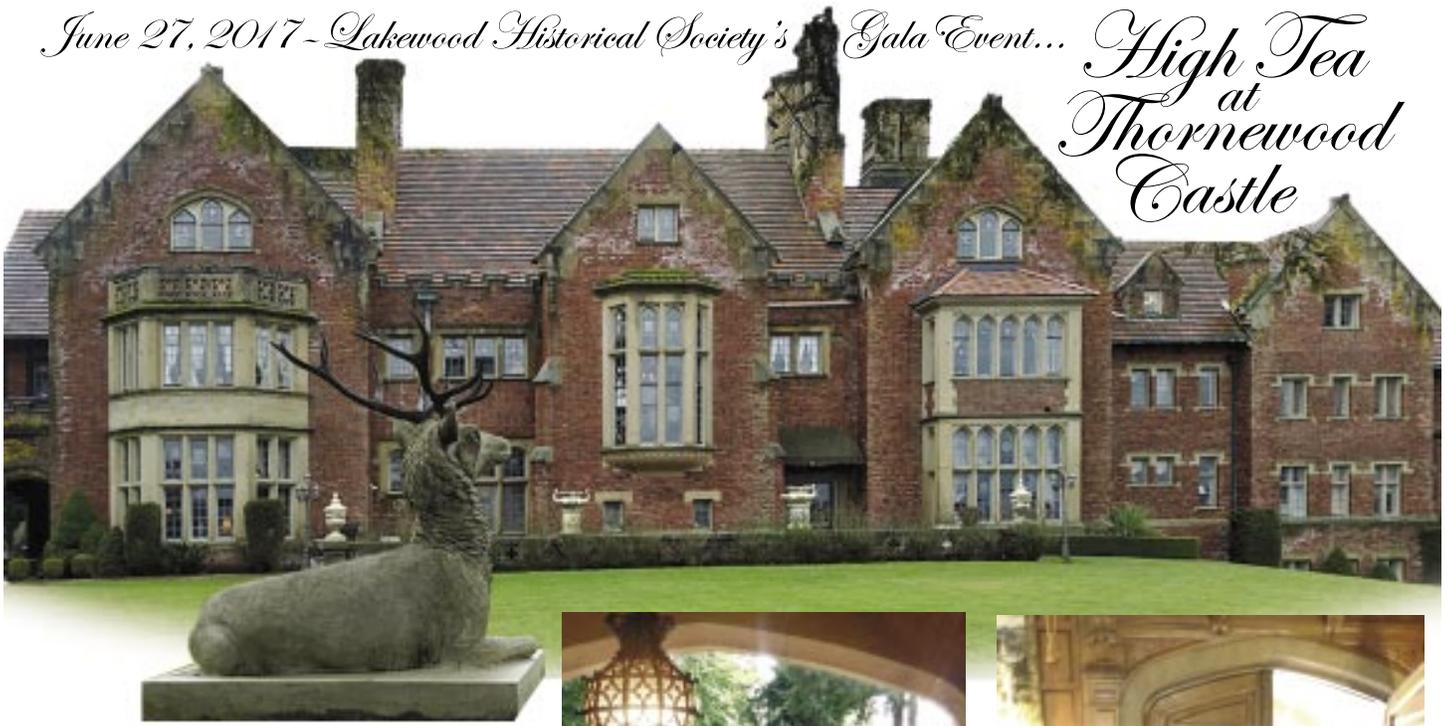


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June 27, 2017 - Lakewood Historical Society's Gala Event... High Tea at Thornewood Castle



Guests arrive, check in, gather in the Great Hall—then it's off to the food line.





Kudos to all who came dressed in period costume.



LHS officers in their finery (l to r) Sharon Taylor, Cindy Duhamel, Emma Pierce, Jim Curley, Sue Scott



Miss Laina Allen picking a winning ticket for the door prize drawing.



Touring the sunken garden.



Lewis Army Museum Grand Re-Opening Aug. 31 2017



Cake awaits the reception



*Welcome Center
for museum
visitors.*



Guests file in to the reception area.



*Jackie Jones-Hook (l) of Buffalo Soldiers
Museum, Lakewood Council members
Mary Moss & Mike Brandstetter.*



Vintage music entertains guests.



Ceiling with massive beams, handsome detailing.



*Synthia Santos and noted military
historian Alan Archambault.*



*Friends of L.A.M. board
member Lt Col (ret) Tom
Morgan by exhibit of Capt
David Stone, supervisor of
construction at Camp Lewis.*



*The Ames family came
from Puyallup to attend
the re-opening.*



*Time capsule containing
Centennial artifacts.
Do not open till 2117!*

“Remembrance” Re-kindled, 80 Years Later



Polly Medlock (center) attends the Boulevard of Remembrance plaque unveiling.

In 1928, Tacoma’s Garden Club established a plan to honor those who served in World War I by planting a corridor of trees dedicated to their memory. Organizations and individuals throughout the county funded placement of 500 trees at \$6 each for a total of \$68,000 (more than \$962,000 in 2017 dollars).

On March 16, 1928, the stretch of U.S. 99 along which the trees were planted was dedicated as the **Boulevard of Remembrance**. Today there are only about 66 trees remaining.

In the 1980s a group of local preservation-

ists, including Tacoma Historical Society member **Charlotte (Polly) Medlock**, waged a successful campaign to have those trees saved.

On August 31, 2017 their efforts were capped with a Boulevard of Remembrance Plaque Commemoration ceremony held outside Lewis Army Museum in conjunction with its grand re-opening.



Polly at work on preservation campaign, 2016.

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Estate of Rhona Diehl
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 James Shell
 Raye Staples
 Jim and Margie Swalley

Welcome! New Members Since June 2017

Dale and Bonnie Lipke
 James Shell
 Richard Wall



“Where have all the prairies gone?” is the question that will be addressed at our October 24th program by Andy Fritz, instructor of Environmental Sciences Program at Clover Park Technical College. And while it’s true the prairies are just about extinct in and around Lakewood, you may be able to get a hint of what they were like by traveling a few miles south to Thurston County...

A Landscape Shaped By Nature and People

By Drew Crooks and Caroline Marschner

The prairies and oak woodlands of South Puget Sound are like no other place in Western Washington.

Here, in a part of the world known for its carpets of coniferous forests, is an open, sun-drenched landscape—an undulating grassland awash each spring in a rainbow display of wildflowers. Butterflies found in few other parts of the world—the Mardon skipper, Taylor’s checkerspot, and silvery blue, to name a few—dance across these lands. Meadowlarks and western bluebirds add to the display. Elk forage here. And while these prairies may seem out of place in rainy Western Washington, they tell a story about our geologic and human history.

The prairies were formed by the retreat of the Vashon glacier 14,000 years ago, which created a large, gravelly outwash plain—droughty, porous soil not particularly hospitable to conifers. Ultimately, however, Douglas-fir would have filled in these lands were it not for the practices of Native Americans, who burned the prairies to keep the firs at bay and maintain the camas and other wildflowers they harvested.

Native Americans also took advantage of the prairies’ location near the Black and Chehalis rivers and adjacent forests. Villagers who lived along these rivers could easily fish and use the resources of the plains, forests, and oak woodlands without having to travel long distances. And with its substantial river system, the area provided an important trading corridor for the region’s earliest people.

Not surprisingly, this open landscape and river system attracted the region’s first white settlers as well.

By the early 19th century, the Hudson’s Bay Company established a series of trading posts

throughout the Northwest, up to what is now Canada, and used some of the prairies for out-stations. In the 1840s and 1850s, pioneers, eager to re-create their farm life and intimidated by the old-growth forests in other parts of the region, began making their homes on the South Sound prairies.

This process was encouraged by the passage of the Donation Land Act in 1850, which gave these pioneers the right to own up to 320 acres (or 640 to married couples) after cultivating the land for four years. In the South Puget Sound, the act was a precursor to the Medicine Creek Treaty, signed in 1854 the region’s Indians sold most of their land to the U.S. government in exchange for reservation lands, payments in non-cash items, and recognized rights to traditional hunting and fishing grounds.

By the 1890s, logging had dramatically transformed the region, and pioneers were less interested in burning the prairies to maintain them. In fact, residents in the late 19th century and early 20th century looked down on this practice after prairie burns touched off massive forest fires. But by then, these natural and human forces had helped to create a flora and fauna unique to Western Washington.

Over the next several decades, these ecologically rich prairies were increasingly lost to development and invasive species. And today, with only 3 percent of this historic landscape remaining, heroic efforts are underway to protect and restore them, efforts that are beginning to bear fruit. Ecologists, volunteers, and landowners have worked tirelessly over the past 10 years to remove invasive species and restore native grasses, oaks, and other habitat. And as a result, western bluebirds are finding new homes in bluebird boxes, safe from starlings and exposure. Hundreds of acres of Scotch broom have been removed. And camas are proliferating once more.

*Drew Crooks is the Lacey Museum’s historian.
Caroline Marschner is The Nature Conservancy’s Mima Mounds steward.*

Just in time for our 20th anniversary, LHS is excited to announce its next project—

2018 COLLECTIBLE CALENDAR

Featuring Lakewood Businesses from 40's 50's & 60's.



Available for purchase starting this October at the Museum and at all our upcoming events. \$10 ea.

We will mail calendars on request for an additional \$3. Order form on pg. 12.

Photos shown here for display purposes only. Actual photos will be even better!

Fall 2017 Calendar of Events

Tues, October 24, 7-9 pm
"Where Have All the Prairies Gone?"



NEW LOCATION for programs: **Best Western Motor Inn Meeting Room, 6125 Motor Ave SW, Lakewood.**

Andy Fritz, instructor of Environmental Sciences Program at Clover Park Technical College tells how various organizations are restoring the prairie and oak savannahs that once proliferated throughout the South Puget Sound region.

Tues, November 28, 7-9 pm
"History of the Philippine Scouts" and Society Annual Meeting



Learn about the soldiers from the Philippines who served in the US military with noted bravery in World War II. Year end reports, elections of board members, recognition of volunteers.

NEW LOCATION—see first column, left.

Thurs, December 14, 7-9 pm
Command Performance of "A Christmas Carol"



Don't be a Scrooge. Join us at the Lakewood Playhouse, 5729 Lakewood Towne Center Blvd SW, for a highly dramatic Society fund-raiser—just in time to celebrate the holidays!

Tickets: \$20 each

 Find us on Facebook

(Lakewood-Historical-Society-Washington-State)

Check our website for more information & current events:

www.lakewoodhistorical.org



**Lakewood
Historical
Society**

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2018 Collectible Calendar
TODAY!**

Celebrate Lakewood history, the Society's 20th anniversary, and the holidays all year long with the gift of this handsome and useful calendar. Be sure to keep one for yourself!

Enclosed is my check or money order for ____ calendars @ \$13 each (\$10 plus \$3 for shipping and handling).

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**Now accepting cell
phone numbers for
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Call or email the Lakewood Historical Society with your details if you want to be kept in the loop about all of our exciting upcoming events!

**Text MUSEUM—
to 49654**

