



# Summer 2022 Prairie Gazette

Official Publication, Lakewood Historical Society



History is an ongoing process—  
and Lakewood's been making a lot of it lately.



◀ Historic crowd learns of local connection to maritime tragedy.



Historic strides in both the art and science ▼ of traffic control.



(See page 6.)



Check out the biggest arts festival in local history when it returns this October...  
(See back page.)



...after you enjoy the most street fairs in Lakewood history this summer!



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### 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, 6114 Motor Avenue SW, Lakewood, WA 98499 • 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 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



Sue Scott

## President's Message

**THANK YOU, THANK YOU** to all who have renewed their membership and to the many who added a donation—it is very much appreciated. Those who are “Friends” and receive this newsletter, maybe you could think about joining the Lakewood Historical Society; only \$20 a year for a single and \$35 for a family. Think about it.

A big shout out to our newest docents: **Wendy Lockhart** and **Dorothy & Bill Wickline!!** Thank you. And I must mention our longtime docents **Bill Emma** and **Shannon Grover** (Shannon also keeps our membership roster current). Still looking for docents—let me know if you are interested.

**Phil Raschke** and I recently gave a presentation on the Historical Society to the Lakewood Lions. Phil also gave a talk about the Buffalo Soldiers to the Widows & Widowers group. We had quite a crowd at the museum for the presentation by **Peter Cook** on “The Titanic”, and Phil Raschke gave a great presentation on the Buffalo Soldiers. We also attended the opening of the Buffalo Soldiers exhibit at the DuPont History Museum. Great museum—stop by sometime. Working on presentations starting in September—any ideas? Let us know.

Some longtime members have passed on: **Patrick Riggs** and **Mary Lou Sclair**. Our condolences to their families.

The City of Lakewood events in the Colonial Plaza have drawn in lots of people to the museum for the first time. The next event “Jazz Night & Car Show” is scheduled for August 13. We open the museum for the same hours, 4-8 p.m., and look forward to seeing you there.

Enjoy the farmer's markets and concerts in the parks! See you.

## WE NEED YOU

### AS A MUSEUM DOCENT!

Do you like history, people, and bringing them together? Lately, your museum has had to limit the hours and days it's open due to a severe and ongoing shortage of docents. No experience necessary, we'll show you the ropes. Call **Sue Scott, 253-588-6354**



A reminder: if you are an Amazon shopper, set up **amazonsmile** and make us your **charity of choice**. Please be sure you designate Lakewood Historical Society **Washington** (there are a few other Lakewood Historical Societies in the USA!) We receive a small percentage of your purchase price at NO extra charge to you.

# Museum Programs Cover Land & Sea

May 10th at the Lakewood History Museum, **Peter Cook**, member of the Titanic Historical Society and the British Titanic Society, presented “The Titanic, the Iceberg and the Rest of the Story”, a lecture with slides that also featured memorabilia and artifacts raised from the sunken ship.

The lecture hall was packed—testimony that public fascination with the Titanic’s tragic maiden voyage remains unabated 25 years after James Cameron’s cinematic version became one of the most popular films of all time.

But what, you might ask, has the Titanic to do with Lakewood’s history? You wouldn’t ask if you were there, of course—the local connection revealed by Mr. Cook was

no doubt the biggest surprise of the evening. We’d love to tell you what it is—but we’d love even more to have you hear it for yourself at Peter’s next presentation, taking place at another great local institution, the Lakewood Arts Festival (FAB, for Film, Arts, Books).

Peter is tentatively scheduled to appear on October 16, but keep an eye on [lakewoodfestival.org](http://lakewoodfestival.org) to be sure. You won’t want to miss him!



*LHS Board Member Phil Raschke (left of screen) introduces speaker Peter Cook, seen at podium below.*



## “Historical Phil”, Darrel Nash Give Buffalo Soldier Presentation

On 21 June, Tacoma Buffalo Soldiers Museum board members **Phil Raschke** and **Darrel Nash** presented a special program at the Lakewood History Museum titled “America’s Buffalo Soldiers, Fact, Fiction and More”. The historical program drew 28 attendees, including Lakewood Deputy Mayor **Mary Moss**.

The presentation covered the birth and development of the Buffalo Soldiers during their 85 years of peacetime and combat service to the United States Army.

Highlights included Buf-

falo Soldier actions on the early western frontier plus service in the Spanish American War, the 1903 safeguarding of Sequoia National Park, battling the famous Wallace, Idaho fire of 1910 and the Pancho Villa expedition of 1914-1917.



During this period the Buffalo Soldiers were awarded 24 Medals of Honor, four of which were presented to the Buffalo Soldier’s Black Seminole Scouts based out of Fort Clark, TX. The Medal of Honor is the Nation’s highest award for bravery.

# Decorative Wraps Applied to Local Traffic Signal Boxes



Lakewood Curiosity Cabinet by Jennifer Crushcoff

Photo by Chuck Mathias



Photos courtesy of Print NW

In July of 2020 the **Lakewood Arts Commission** presented its proposal for a Public Art Program to the City Council, a plan it had worked on for six months. It would be the first such program in the city's history, providing a budget and annual timelines for the creation and installation of "murals, interactive art, rotating art, iconic art"—and some things called "utility box wraps".

To spend tax dollars beautifying objects so commonplace and drably functional as utility boxes (in particular, those at intersections that control traffic signals) might have struck some as a questionable choice—perhaps until they heard of how positive public reaction had been in cities across the country (Tacoma and Seattle, for example) that had made the choice and wrapped their boxes.

It may have been due to their popularity that the Commission decided in November of 2020 to create

a subcommittee dedicated solely to the wraps—choosing locations for them, soliciting and selecting artists to create them, overseeing their production and installation.

Then, Covid—and the project was delayed for two years, finally getting off to a fast start early in 2022. So fast a start that no doubt the following list of artists and creations is by now incomplete:

**Tribal Quilt** By Rosa Cruz  
Bridgeport Way & San Francisco Ave

**Colorful Rocks** by Rosa Cruz  
Bridgeport Way & 108th Street

**Leap of Faith** by Katie Dean  
South Tacoma Way & 84th Street

**Steila-Cross** by Kelly Loney  
Steilacoom Boulevard & Lakewood Drive

**Lakewood Curiosity Cabinet** by Jennifer Crushcoff

Steilacoom Boulevard & Farwest Drive  
**Mt. Rainier** by Chrystine Ward Westphal  
100th Street & Bridgeport

**Green Heron** by Chrystine Ward Westphal  
Steilacoom Boulevard & Ardmore

According to the subcommittee's minutes, other artists whose works have been chosen are Mauricio Robalino and Susan Russell Hall, with other names soon to come.

Print Northwest, the company that prints and installs the wraps, says "the boxes are treated with a durable and vibrant wrap around all four sides and the top. The wraps are resistant to weather and graffiti, adding a lasting flair to local intersections."

For many years to come, then, Lakewoodians can look forward to an outdoor art gallery with an ever-growing collection of unique and colorful works. Keep your eyes peeled for each new addition!

## President Sue Scott, Board Member Phil Raschke Make Presentation on Lakewood History Museum to Lions Club



The Lakewood History Museum was invited to give a museum update at the June 27, 2022 meeting of the **Lakewood Lions** held at the Lakewood Ram restaurant.

The update included the financial status of the museum, current exhibits and upcoming events—projects, volunteer staffing needs and a brief history of the museum's recently opened "Ivan" exhibit (see the Fall 2021 edition of *Prairie Gazette*, available online at lakewoodhistorical.org, for the complete story of Ivan and his exhibit).

Sue and Phil's presentation was part of the museum's "***If you can't come to us, we will come to you***" program. A special attendee was **Mike Brandstetter**, Lakewood City Council member.

*Left: President Sue Scott and Board Member Phil Raschke display copies of the museum's Prairie Gazette newsletter at Lakewood Lions June meeting at the Lakewood RAM restaurant.*

## Coming to Tillicum, with your help— The Dr. Claudia Thomas Legacy House

The following article, submitted by Ellie Wilson and Andie Gernon, is adapted from the June 30, 2022 online edition of Suburban Times.

**The Friends of Dr. Claudia Thomas**, in partnership with **Habitat for Humanity**, are sponsoring a home in Lakewood's Tillicum neighborhood. Building low-income housing in Tillicum is a project that **Claudia Thomas** would whole heartedly support.

As Friends, we feel building a Habitat House in Tillicum is a fitting way to pay homage to Claudia's legacy in Lakewood.

Sponsoring a Habitat House requires \$100,000 to begin construction. Several private donors have already committed \$50,000+ in verbal pledges and we are now ready to open this project to the public.

The first house in this 12-unit Habitat Project will be known as the **Dr. Claudia Thomas Legacy House** with construction beginning next spring in 2023. Donations and pledges are requested by September 20th of 2022. Prior to ground-breaking next year, we will be campaigning for hands-on worker bees in helping with construction.

For additional information, including how to make your donation, call **Andie Gernon (253-973-1932)** or **Ellie Wilson (253-582-9249)**, Co-Chairs of The Friends of Claudia Thomas.

**Thank you in advance for your generosity and support.**



*Ex-Mayor and Councilmember Thomas at 20th Anniversary of Lakewood cityhood, 2016*

## NEW MEMBERS:

Karen Good  
Dale & Kristin Moultime  
Mark Minickiello

## RECENT DONORS:

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*in memory of Bill & Donna Cable*  
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*in memory of Bill & Donna Cable*

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## “Never Easy to Say Goodbye to a Friend”

by Bill Emma, LHM Docent

Sadly, a true enthusiast of history and dedicated Philippine Scout re-enactor, **Arturo Garcia**, passed away April 8, 2022 only a few months before his 70th birthday.

Arturo delighted in presenting his extensive collection of early 1900s military equipment, uniforms and memorabilia. He lectured on the Filipino involvement in World War II, as well as the overlooked Philippine-American War of 1899-1913.

Equally important were Arturo's dedicated group of "Living History Scouts" who proudly marched in



Arturo Garcia

Veterans Day, Memorial Day and 4th of July parades, including other local events such as Armed Forces Day on JBLM.

Arturo arrived in the U.S.A. from Batangas, Philippines as a teenager where he joined the Marines and later the Army. A genuine trooper to the end.

Our condolences to his daughter, Joanne, who was with him when he passed and to his entire family.

His gentle, lively, and determined spirit will be sorely missed.

## Invasion of the Roundabouts

If you've driven along Gravelly Lake Drive lately, you're bound to have noticed something new: traffic circles (or roundabouts) installed at a couple of busy intersections. While roundabouts may have more fans in Europe—where "four-way stop" intersections are virtually unknown—they're actually rooted in the USA.

The basic shape goes all the way back to the 1790s, when architect and engineer **Pierre L'Enfant** proposed a number of circular intersections in Washington, D.C.'s street layout, including the famous Dupont Circle. American businessman **William Eno** revived the form in 1905 for New York City's Columbus Circle, widely considered the country's first circular intersection designed for the automobile era.

# Mueller-Harkins Airport

Historical Markers of Lakewood:  
15th in a Series



*Judging by the cars in this undated photo of the Mueller-Harkin airport's only surviving structure (seen here as both hangar and administration building), it was probably taken shortly before the federal government condemned the property to construct an Advanced Naval Base in 1944.*

In 1922 Rudy Mueller and Leo Harkins, successful providers of ground-based transportation—they owned a thriving Buick dealership in Tacoma from 1916 to the early 50's—decided to try their hands at aviation. The money was never quite as good, but their efforts did earn them the plaque seen here. It hangs next to the big door in their old hangar, right.



*Close by the intersection of Steilacoom Blvd & Lakeview Drive, the hangar today houses Maintenance & Grounds for Clover Park Tech.*



*Washington Air College instructor (right) and students.*



*Odds are one of these gents is Mr. Mueller, the other Mr. Harkins—but research so far has failed to confirm it.*

## ON THIS SITE STANDS THE MUELLER-HARKINS AIRPORT HANGAR

In 1922 Rudy A. Mueller and Leo H. Harkins acquired the Tacoma Speedway and built an airport for Tacoma. The first airmail service arrived here in April of 1926. In 1927 this field was to become the Tacoma Municipal Airport with trimotor airline service. In 1929 this building, at a cost of \$10,000, became the Airport Administration Building. During the 1930's and 1940's pilot training (Washington Air College), national air races and many air shows were held here. In 1944 the government filed condemnation proceedings against the airport and it became federal property. An Advanced Navy Base was built, but the old hangar was spared. In 1949 the property was declared surplus and acquired by the Clover Park School District and later became Clover Park Technical College. This hangar is one of only a few in the nation to remain intact at its original location.

Marker Donated By:  
Lakewood Historical Society 2002



## Lakewood Historical Society

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**Lakewood Film, Art & Book Festival** is an event that started with the Asian Film Festival operated as an independent event. An arts exhibit followed as a separate event. The two were held as individual events conducted in a shared space and date. A third event, the BookFest element, was added for the 2018 combined event, now branded as **FAB**. All three events of the festival are citizen-initiated and volunteer staffed.

The Film Festival has grown beyond its Asian Films origin to a venue showcasing commercial films of national and international flavor. Always with an eye on expanding the variety of art, entertainment and literature for Lakewood and surrounding populations, the 2021 event opened up to local film production following annual themes in a competitive environment provided by the Lakewood Arts Commission. Commercial films are shown for free



several times each day of the three-day festival.

FAB could not exist without a small army of volunteers that come together each year. They spend hours setting up the events then stay throughout each day to see that all runs smoothly. A snack bar service is also provided for visitors, a critical task managed entirely by volunteers. When it's over the volunteers break down the festival and pack it for storage.

See the result of their selfless efforts while you appreciate a world of new artistic and literary sensations at this year's FAB:

**OCTOBER 14, 15, 16** at Clover Park Technical College's **McGavick Center**, 4500 Steilacoom Blvd in Lakewood. **Doors open at noon; admission and parking are free.**

Check [www.lakewoodhistorical.org](http://www.lakewoodhistorical.org) for notices about upcoming programs.