Little Church on the Prairie Celebrating 75 Years of Service in Lakewood

he year was 1937. The place was an expanse of open prairie covered with Scotch broom and flowing quack grass. It was a small country store; a combination grocery and hardware

store built in 1920 but, 17 years later, abandoned and falling in disrepair. It stood alone in the middle of several hundred acres of land that had been purchased by **Norton Clapp**. The main purpose for Mr. Clapp's purchase was to develop a shopping center, later named Lakewood Community Center. Even though the little store was a part of that purchase, it was not included in the original design of the center.

At the urging of his wife, **Mary**, that little store would be transformed into the beginnings of what is now known



Little store on the prairie, circa 1936

as "The Little Church on the Prairie". The Clapps (especially Mary, who was an architect and whose father was a Presbyterian minister) and a small group of area residents met in the basement of the Lakewood Theater and created the church's initial design and decor with a strong preference to keep

the building in conformity with the colonial appearance of the buildings in the shopping center.



A year or two after photo above, and what a difference! Note tower of Lakewood theater in background.

The single-story feature was retained, and the group's thinking flowed into creation of a small, white building resembling what might be considered a New England-style country church. The building, the congregation, and God's presence created a warm, comfortable atmosphere that attracted a large portion of the populace and marked the beginning of extraordinary growth.

At 10:00 am on Sunday, September 18, 1939, a church was created with 71 charter members. The Pastor's monthly salary was \$100. On Saturday, members of the Jewish faith utilized the facility, and on Sundays a variety of Christian faiths (Roman Catholic, Evangelicals, etc.) could be found in worship.

The church, very early on, became an active participant in community affairs and was responsible for starting a Cub Scout Pack on September 1, 1939 that is still active today.

In 1943, **Dr. William Perry McCormick** accepted a call to serve as pastor and remained 17 years. His See CHURCH, page 6

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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

We just had a taste of winter in December with our two weeks of cold temperatures. So far we have dodged anything worse but the rest of the country hasn't been so lucky. I have a feeling our generator will be coming in handy this year.

Something special took place at our Annual Meeting held in November. Three awards debuted that honored volunteers for their service to the Society. The LTG Bill Harrison Leadership Award was presented to Society Treasurer, Gary Fowler; the Cyrus Happy III Historian Award was presented to Walter Neary; the David Sclair Journalism Award was established; and Carol Moreno received the Volunteer of the Year Award for her countless hours she has devoted to the management of the Museum collections.

As you can see, we again are offering a newsletter "chuck full" of great content. We have republished the *History of Little Church on the Prairie* as they celebrate their 75th anniversary. **Nancy Covert** has done an in-depth story about the Church's organ. She also interviewed **Mike Larson**, the current owner of Allen Realtors and son-in-law to **Harold Allen Jr**., the founder. It is a local company that has been in business since 1940 and in Lakewood since 1953.

We also are planning great programs this year. In February we will learn more about the "local hangouts" we have all frequented for over 50 years. The current owner of Burs, **Tim Tweten**, will share the plans for remodeling all of the restaurants he owns. In March we will again celebrate Women's History Month; this time we'll be celebrating local women writers, authors and journalists. In May we will be celebrating Lakewold Gardens 25th anniversary with a very special presentation.

Our major fund-raising event this year will be jointly sponsored with Tacoma Historical Society in October at the McGavick Center. They have been very successful with their annual "Destiny Dinner". Last year the theme was local sports stars and held at the Summit Club at Cheney Stadium. This year's theme is honoring our military heritage highlighting the establishment of Camp Lewis and its involvement in World War I. Stay tuned for more details.

Don't forget to visit our website, www.lakewoodhistorical.org or our Facebook page, Lakewood-Historical-Society-Washington-State and "Like" us. We welcome your input about how to improve our sites. Contact **Chuck Mathias** at chuck.mathias@gmail.com.

Becky Huber

LOOK TO THE READER BOARD FOR NEWS ABOUT LAKEWOOD EVENTS

By Nancy Covert

Looking for information about upcoming Lakewood events? Check out the large white reader board located on Gravelly Lake Drive.

A reader board message posted in early October announced that the **Allen Company** was celebrating its 73rd anniversary.

Allen Realtors, the prominent Pierce County realtor that had its start in Tacoma in 1940, has been a Lakewood fixture since 1953. That's the year when it relocated its Tacoma headquarters to the suburbs.

That first local branch office, explained **Mike Larson**, the realtor's Designated Broker (as well as being son-in-law of the late **Harold Allen, Jr.**), was located in a small house

across the road from the Lakewood Colonial Center.

The Center had opened in

1937 and was one of the first suburban shopping centers in the country. It marked its 75th anniversary last year.

Allen Realtors' homey office now is inside a small house at 9805 Gravelly Lake Dr. SW that's stood on that site since the 50s. Although the "house" has been remodeled a few times to accommodate its expanded staff, the business retains a hometown appearance.

Step inside the front door into a comfortable, living-room-style reception area. Continue down the hallway into Mr. Larson's

office that's decorated with Realtor-related memorabilia amassed over the years: an assortment of honors and professional accolades, including a Sasquatch-sized speaker's gavel that hangs on one wall. There's even a yellowed copy of a 1949 Tacoma newspaper with several "Allen's Finer Homes" ads.

Beginning with its first office on 11th and Pacific in Tacoma,* **Harold Allen, Jr.** took over the business after founder **Harold Allen, Sr.**, died in the mid 40s. He "recognized the future of Lakewood and suburban locations, and established a Lakewood branch office."



Harold A. Allen

Company Realtors

Allen Realtors' "home" office on Gravelly Lake Drive.

*In 1909 Tacoma's Board of Real Estate Directors, one of several professional organizations across the U.S. for realtors, was established.

Lakewood Water District A short history

by Nancy Covert

What IS that odd-looking structure near Bridgeport Way that looks like an upside down flashlight?

It's the City of Lakewood's main water tank, and it holds a half million gallons of water.

Painted a distinctive aqua blue shade, the tank was erected in 1970, according to **Dave Hall**, Department Head for Lakewood's Water District.

With a total of 13 tanks, a second "upside down flashlight-style tank" or "hydro-pillar" is located on Hemlock Hill above Ft. Steilacoom Park. Yes, it's possible to go up inside the pillar, Hall says.

"It's the highest spot in the city," Hall continues.

The city's storage capacity includes wells (and reservoirs) capable of storing 1.35 million gallons to eight million gallons.

Lakewood's Water District was created in 1943. Here are a few statistics on a water system that serves about 61,000 customers:



369 water connections

41 miles of water mains

Three storage tanks with a capacity of 600,000 gallons

Four wells

Three elected commissioners

Average bi-monthly bill was \$2.58, serving a population of 7.900 people



Page 4



16.814 water connections

248 miles of water mains

13 storage tanks with a capacity of 20,000,000 gallons

31 wells

Three elected commissioners

Average bi-monthly bill is \$25.20, based on 1,500 ccf serving a population of 61,000 people/whole sale customers

Supplies water to Summit Water and Supply Company

Created a network of emergency inter-ties With surrounding communities of Tacoma City Water, Parkland Light and Water and Steilacoom, to name a few.

Lakewood Historical Society will host a program in 2014 about the Lakewood Water District.

Watch for further information about this program.



Church organ history

By Nancy Covert

The pipe organ, according to Wikipedia, evolved from an instrument known as a panpipe: a collection of assorted reeds tied together and activated by air blown through an opening. An organ-like instrument is believed to have been built about 3 B.C.

Mouth organs and calliopes are part of that heritage. Calliopes, water-powered devices more commonly used in circuses, once had a grim purpose. Their music drowned out the agonized screams of Roman prisoners as they were being tortured or mauled.

The peak years for artistic organ building were between 1500-1800, declining during the Industrial Age. At one time, building an organ was considered one of the highest callings one could attain.

"It was the NASA of its day," according to Paul Fritts, a local master organ builder whose workshop is in Parkland. Fritts is the son of Dr. R. Byard Fritts of Pacific Lutheran University.

The cathedral-like organ in PLU's Lagerquist Hall was designed and built in the 1990s by Fritts. It's truly an impressive blend of metal pipes and ornate woodwork—in the style of European cathedral organs.



Fit to accompany a heavenly choir. The Little Church on the Prairie's tracker organ.

What about the organ at Little Church on the Prairie?

The current organ, called a "tracker", installed at the rear of the sanctuary, was placed in Nov. 1986. It was designed, built and installed by the Adrian Koppejan Pipe Organ Company of Chilliwack, British Columbia. At its dedication service three months later in February 1987, David Dahl from Pacific Lutheran University was the guest organist.

According to information published in "Preliminary Publication of the History of the Little Church on the Prairie" in 2010, the church's first organ was a Balcom and Vaughan, a main and echo* instrument. The echo configuration was a memorial gift in remembrance of Virginia Jean Mann. The story of its installation was featured in the May 4, 1958 edition of the *Lakewood Log*. Dr. Byard Fritts served as guest organist at that installation.

What's a "tracker-action" organ? Unlike the electropneumatic organs, the more common pipe organs in use in the country, there is no use of electricity in the keys of the console. The action is mechanical through the use of hundreds of wires connecting the keys to the organ's valve system. This style of construction is as old as organ building and is common throughout Europe. The valve system combined with low wind pressure gives the tracker organ a tonal purity that is unsurpassed.

The church's organ contains 15 ranks of pipes, arranged in 13 speaking stops. (A "rank" is a complete set of like pipes, ranging in number from 32 to 60 and more pipes per rank.

Little Church on the Prairie's organ contains 784 pipes that were shipped from Germany in an "unvoiced" state, and each pipe was individually "voiced" and tuned by **Mr. Koppejan** and **Mr. David Keppel-Jones** during the installation process. Through this process, the pipes were perfectly matched to the church's acoustics.

According to information provided by Little Church on the Prairie member John McGowan, Koppejan was born in Holland and began his organ-building career there with his father. He studied in Germany with **Friederich Weigle** in pipe organ voicing and tonal finishing. He and his family immigrated in 1974 to Canada, settling in Chilliwack, where he established his own company. At the time the tracker organ was installed, he was building a new tracker organ for Grace Lutheran Church of Camrose, Alberta.

To view Paul Fritts' Parkland workshop visit www.frittsorgan.com

^{*} Main and echo: an organ with additional pipes set at a distance from the main instrument to provide echo effects. Page 5

CHURCH from page one

initial salary was \$3,000 per year and \$75 moving expense (the total operating budget was \$4,500). During this time, the congregation witnessed a rapid increase in membership and a much-needed



The sanctuary, 1939. Note folding chairs.

expansion of the facilities. It was during Dr. McCormick's tenure that the Session embarked on a plan seeking to purchase the building and the land. The church had been paying \$20 per month for rent, but had fallen into arrears in the amount of \$1,000 for rent and utility bills. Mr. and Mrs. Clapp provided one-quarter of the money needed to make the purchase. With great enthusiasm, the 92 remaining members subscribed and raised the balance of \$6,000!

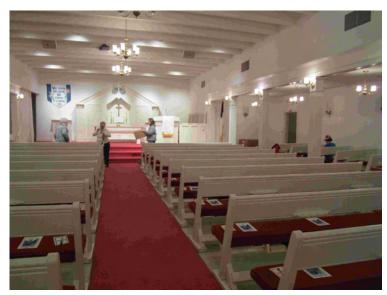
The congregation almost doubled in size, and new demands for additional space were obvious. There was an urgent need for more Sunday School rooms and a place for a variety of fellowship gatherings, and work was started to meet those needs. World War II caused a halt in the construction program, but congregation members continued their fundraising activities for the future additions. In May of 1948, the new church school building was dedicated.

Many changes were made during the years between 1949 and 1954. In 1949, Prairie Hall was erected and dedicated. In 1950, \$5,000 was raised toward expansion of the sanctuary. The dream of "Operation Bulge" was closer to becoming a reality when Hall Construction Company won the bid. The seating capacity of the sanctuary was increased to 414, the ceiling of the sanctuary was raised two and a half feet, and the narthex was almost doubled in size. A choir room was added, and space for floral arranging and preparing for communion

services was created. Shortly after the expansion project was completed two organs were installed.

From its beginning, The Little Church on the Prairie operated in accordance with Presbyterian policy and had Presbyterian ministers, but it did not become identified officially as a Presbyterian Church until January 11, 1957. By 1964, the church membership roll was over 900. Nursery facilities provided for infants during services and a preschool program had been initiated. Various programs and ministry groups existed, reaching out to the people of the church and to the community; and benevolent giving created a worldwide ministry.

By 1966, over-crowding in the church school forced consideration of expansion to provide additional space to accommodate the increase. This ambitious expansion called for the church to add a library and reception room to the sanctuary building, enlarge Prairie Hall, build a new administration addition and remodel an existing education wing. The cost? A whopping \$225,000!



The sanctuary, 2012.

A unique plan was devised whereby church members would contribute \$1 per week for each \$1,000 of income per year for 156 weeks. The congregation could reach its goal of \$175,000, and a mortgage for the balance could be retired without putting a strain on the budget. In one year, enough money had been accumulated to begin construction. The new education wing was dedicated January 2, 1968, and was named McCormick Hall. The other revisions were made in 1969.

In the fall of 1968, The Little Church on the Prairie took on a new challenge by creating a cooperative nursery school. Small study groups were formed



Architect's rendering of church school.

and seminars were conducted to nurture the parents of our nursery school children. A strong youth program following the "Youth Club" model, was begun, with annual mission trips for the senior high youth being a highlight. The childcare center opened in 1979, becoming one of the first to care for children less than a year old.

A gala evening event marked the 50th Anniversary of the Little Church on the Prairie in 1988. Prior to that big event, problems with the organ installed in 1958 were experienced and the church was finding it increasingly difficult getting materials to refurbish the bellows and securing technicians capable of doing the work. The Organ and Carillon Task Force was appointed on March 20, 1984. Through their good works, a new tracker organ was secured and installed in the rear of the sanctuary with a dedication service conducted on February 15, 1987. (See complete story about the organ on page 5.)

About the same time, it was noted that some of the roof areas needed attention, so a major effort was born to correct the problems. Many times down through the years the necessary building maintenance had often been done at a less than desirable level due to finances at the time.

In 1994, it was recognized that the need was far more real than most could visualize, and a revitalizing and modernization program was undertaken. The needs were met by very successful fund-raising campaign that exceeded the goal by \$140,000, secured by pledges over a three-year period.

The pastoral leadership has changed along with the remodels and expansion projects, a total of 17 pastors and 6 associate or interim pastors have served in the 75 year history. The longest-serving pastors include **Dr. William McCormick**, from 1943-1959, **Dr. Vernon Elgin**, 1970-1988 and **Dr. Charles Carlson**, 1989-2006. Interim pastors served for four years until **Pastor James Kim** was hired in 2010 as Chief of Staff, moving from Dallas, TX. **Associate Pastor Brad Epperso**n joined the staff in 2012. Another staff position was filled in

2013 when **Kathryn Lehmann** was hired as Director of Music. None of the major building projects or regular Church activities could have been accomplished without the selfless service of twelve Elders and twenty-one Deacons, Committee members and other volunteers.

Sunday services are held at 8:45 a.m. (traditional) and 11:00 a.m. (contemporary). More information is available on the Little Church on the Prairie's web site at www.lcop.ws, or by calling the church office at 253-588-6631, or visiting the church at 6310 Motor Ave. SW in Lakewood.



The Little Church on the Prairie, Autumn 2013

Credits: This article is excerpted from the original "Brief History of The Little Church on the Prairie" that was prepared in 1961 and was reproduced by the church's Senior High Youth Club in 1981. It has been revised several times over the years to reflect major facility improvements. Photos are provided from the archives of Little Church on the Prairie.

Focal Point in Lakeview built in 1885

By Nancy Covert

The two-story green with cream trim frame house at the corner of 108th and Kline St. SW was built

in 1885, making it one of the area's oldest still-standing homes.

In 1975, *News Tribune* writer **Helen Felker** wrote the following story:

The Victorian house in Lakeview looks as it did in its heyday—and that was 1885 when the final gingerbread trim was added to the front porch.

Today it has been newly painted a green to match the lawn. A contrasting avocado green is yet to be applied to the jigsawed wood trim fashioned in scrolls and designs of the American Victorian Age.

"More people have stopped at the house," said then occupant **Lily Momblow**, who lived there 15 years and "every so often someone will knock on the door and ask if he or she might photograph the house or sketch it. One day I looked out the window to see a class of art students painting one particular angle of the house. It seems that the southwest angle is best."

The house on 108th St. is a convenient place for Mrs. Momblow to live. It is close to the Lakeview Congregational Church, where the Ladies Aid often meets. Recently it was renamed as the Women's Circle.

The **Herbert Algeos**, considered pioneers of the Lakewood/ Lakeview area, originally lived at the Lakeside Country Club on

American Lake. Mr. Algeo recalled that the Lakewood house was home to the superintendent of the Pacific Coast Steel Corporation, based in Lakeview (when it dreamed about becoming the "Pittsburgh of the West").

The mill, however, went bankrupt in the panic of 1893. Later the machinery was taken to Seattle and the mill boomed durin

and the mill boomed during WW I. It later was incorporated into the Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

In the 1880s the master of the house, a man named Judge Wilson, according to the article, wore a high starched collar with his highbutton suit and a vest-pocket watch with a chain and fob that gave him the necessary prestige for his position as vice president of a steel mill.

Ladies wore petticoats that rustled against each other. Their hair was combed high and adorned with pins and combs. Mother and daughters studied etiquette, put on airs, and did the same with their houses.

A Victorian house was built with high porches, turrets and gables, towers on the outside and high ceilings, dark and steep stairways inside.

In the 1880s, families furnished their homes with heavy furniture, floral carpets, brica-brac, gold mirrors and paintings. Parlors were so crammed with furniture, a visitor barely could make his way from one room to another. A horse-drawn buggy awaited patiently beside the front door for callers.





Typical Victorian architectural details. Cut glass in the front door (top); carriage lamp on the front porch.

Mr. Algeo added, "we looked out on Mount Tacoma and not Mount Rainier, as the Rainier Brewery and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce would like you to believe."



"Community service and leadership in the real estate industry" have long been company hallmarks, according to the Realtor's brochure. Allen Realtors has won numerous civic and business awards including Pacific Lutheran University's Family Enterprise Institute Business of the Year Award and the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce's Business of the Year Award.

They also have provided academic scholarships to graduating seniors from Clover Park, Lakes and Steilacoom high schools.

In its 73 years of operation, the business name has evolved from "Allen's Finer Homes," to "'Harold Allen Co." Now it is known as "Allen Realtors."

At present Allen Realtors has 31 agents, including long-time realtors **Stew Wegener**, 85, and **Betty Denklau**, 80.

Staff also includes **Marie Barth**, a Lakewood City Councilmember, who, according to a recent reader board message, currently was being honored as the "Top Listing Agent in the 3rd Quarter."

"We're really like a big family," says Mike.

The company specializes primarily in residential properties. It also handles some commercial sales, as well as property management.

Throughout the past five years' recession, Larson said, it's been "the rental business that's provided stability" for them.

During the past seven decades, Mike continues, the company has done about 24,500 transactions. Citing major sales during that time, he adds that the 900-acre Oakbrook housing development likely was the largest sale the company handled. He estimates there are about 2,500 homes in that development.

Mike emphasizes that Allen Realtors' business philosophy is based on the promise to "provide you and your family the best possible assistance in satisfying your real estate needs."

The reader board may also be used to publicize local events. Any organization, etc. wanting its news to be "published" should contact the office at **582-6111** at least two weeks before the event is scheduled.

WELCOME! New LHS Members Since Fall 2013

Micki A. Boyle **Bob Brunke** Caring for Kids (Diane Formoso) Charlotte Carrell **Debi Harris Heinz Haskins** Heritage Bank (Jay Mayer) **Dennis Higashiyama** Richard and Juley Hoffmeister Michael Keohi **David and Carol Ludwig** Scott and Amy Luekenga **Franeine Marsh** Jean and Sandy Mazzei Joan Myers **Melody Perrussel** Harold and Sandi Shellabarger Sookie Schuyler Leslie Swalley Linda Tatlock **Judy Turcotte Eric Warn Harry and Jan Welling** Gene and Ellie Wilson **Eric Winter**

LHS Pop Quiz

(Nature Gone Wild Edition)

1962: Lakewood, along with the rest of western WA & OR, is hit by its most expensive natural disaster to date. What is it?

Which of our 3 most recent big earthquakes was the strongest: 1949's, 1965's, or 2001's?

Which one's epicenter was just 6 miles from Lakewood, on Anderson Island?

True or false: Lakewood received a heavy dusting of ash during the 1980 eruption of Mt. St. Helens.

Glaciers were responsible for all of Lakewood's lakes, except for man-made: a) Lake Steilacoom, b) American Lake, or c) Sequalitchew Lake.

Answers in Spring 2014 newsletter.

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Lakewood Historical Society & Museum

2013 Museum Fund Contributors

January 1st thru December 15th

Thank You, Museum Fund Donors & Sponsors

2013 Goal: \$25,000 for Operations, Education, Exhibits, Programs & Community Outreach

Actual to date: \$21,212 from 176 generous donors and sponsors

City of Lakewood Lodging Tax

helps support the Lakewood History Museum displays and exhibits as well as Society community outreach, promotions and educational programs.

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Honorary contributions:

Rose Murphy Endowment "Keep Lakewood Beautiful" by Robert Warfield

LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

November YTD 2013

Opening Cash on Hand - 01/01/2013 Checking Money Market Total	\$ 1,974.35 \$ 9,563.81 \$ 11,538.16
Income - 11 Months 2013 YTD Grants Memberships Donations – Museum Fund Sponsorships Memorials Special Fund Raisers Bank Interest	\$ 45,500.00 \$ 7,965.00 \$ 14,822.55 \$ 0.00 \$ 50.00 \$ 1,990.00 \$ 56.95
Other Total Income	\$ 594.42 \$ 70,978.92
Expenses - 11 Months 2013 YTD Operations & Administration Museum Lease Equipment/Software/Furnishings Professional Develop/Recognition Contract Services & Support Insurance Museum Fund Raising Special Events Marketing/Publications/Advertising Newsletter Printing/Mailing Graphic Design Services Web Site Hosting/Maintenance Educational Programs/Events Museum Exhibits/Displays Acquisitions/Collections Historical Markers	\$ 4,713.06 \$ 16,500.00 \$ 626.96 \$ 909.41 \$ 7,026.27 \$ 1,780.00 \$ 1,644.80 \$ 0.00 \$ 18,451.64 \$ 3,604.54 \$ 6,735.63 \$ 345.00 \$ 1,155.16 \$ 136.89 \$ 125.00 \$ 406.64
Total Expenses	\$ 64,236.00
Closing Cash on Hand - 11/30/2013 Checking Money Market	\$ 3,113.57 \$ 15,242.51
Total	\$ 18,356.08

Non-Profit Org US Postage Paid Tacoma, WA Permit #356



Programs & Events, Winter 2014

January- no scheduled program

February 18th, 7 pm- Favorite Joints, Hangouts and Road Houses, St Mary's Episcopal Church. Presented by Tim Tweten, owner of South Sound Restaurant Group that owns Burs and the Poodle Dog. Learn about major remodeling planned for this year, share your memories of the area's favorite restaurants that have served great "home cooking" for over 50 years.

February 20th, 1 pm- History of the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots), "Let's Make History Together" series at Lakewood Senior Activity Center, 9112 Lakewood Dr SW, Lakewood. Learn about the fascinating, little-known history of the women who provided vital services during World War II.

March 18th, **7 pm-Lakewood Area Women Writers**, St Mary's Episcopal Church. Celebrate Women's History Month by recognizing the contributions of local writers, authors and journalists. To include Della Gould Emmons, Dorothy Wilhelm, and Nancy Covert.

Monthly programs are held in the Parish Hall at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to the Lakewood Library.

Find us on Facebook (search for Lakewood Historical Society Washington State) or check our website for more information and current events: www.LakewoodHistorical.org