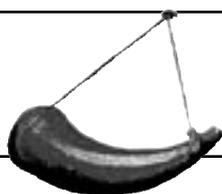


BECAUSE OUR HISTORY MATTERS



# Brairie Gazette

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2009



## Museum future topic for special meet April 21

The future of the Lakewood History Museum will be the top subject at a special meeting of the Lakewood Historical Society Tuesday, April 21. The meeting will be held in the Lakewood City Hall Council Chambers starting at 7 pm.

Becky Huber, president of the society, said the board of directors has scheduled the meeting to allow members to learn more about the financial status of the museum and society and offer their own ideas on how to progress in the future.

Formed about 10 years ago, the Lakewood Historical Society has grown to more than 250 individual and business members and has operated a storefront museum in the Lakewood Colonial Center since 2006. With the current space lease up for renewal and Lakewood Motel and Hotel Tax contributions to the society cut this year, decisions must be made on how to progress, according to Huber.

“The museum has been an asset for the community and attendance has been increasing slowly,” she explained. Costs have been reduced to the bare minimum but at least \$25,000 is needed to cover space rent for a

year. A fund-raising campaign has brought in around \$10,000, according to Treasurer Gary Fowler.

The Society is also negotiating with Clover Park Technical College for use of the historical Mueller-Harkins Hangar building on the college campus for a permanent museum. BCRA Architects is working with the society and college on a plan for the conversion of the building into

a museum.

“There’s a lot up in the air,” the society president said. “We want to see the museum stay open but we need to have the financing in place before we make the final decision on the lease, I hope this special meeting will result in positive ideas.”

The meeting is open to the public.

Historic  
**FORT STEILACOOM**  
160th Anniversary Celebration  
Fort Steilacoom Park, Lakewood  
**May 9 & 10, 2009**  
Washington Territory  
pioneer history encampments & demonstrations  
\* pioneer & military encampments from the 1790s & 1800s \* guided tours of Historic Fort Steilacoom \*  
\* opening/closing ceremonies with state, city, and Fort Lewis dignitaries \* US Army marching band \*  
\* infantry cavalry artillery demonstrations \* \* modern food vendors \* period merchants w/ reproduction wares \*  
**CIVIL WAR SKIRMISHES DAILY**  
\* Saturday 9 AM - 5 PM \* Sunday 9 AM - 3 PM \*  
\* Skirmishes at 11 AM & 2 PM \*  
**Admission \$5**  
Kids 7 & under FREE \* Active Military w/ ID FREE  
\* Attention: activities, encampments, and/or schedule may be subject to change without notice.  
\* An official event program with schedule of activities will be available the day of the event.  
For more information: [Steilacoom160.info](http://Steilacoom160.info)  
(206) 784-4123 & [Steilacoom160@hotmail.com](mailto:Steilacoom160@hotmail.com)



## Lakewood Historical Society

### President

Becky Huber \* 253-582-8682  
E-mail craftyhubers@comcast.net

### Vice President

Glen Spieth \* 253-584-3930  
b17relic@comcast.net

### Secretary

Sue Scott \* 253-588-6354  
nonniesue@live.com

### Treasurer

Gary Fowler \* 253-584-3958  
gjfowler@hotmail.com

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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 Historical Museum, 6211 Mt Tacoma Dr. SW, Lakewood, WA 98499

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.

Content of this publication is copyright protected by the Society and/or the authors and artists.

### 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 the website for information on events and activities.

[www.lakewoodhistorical.org](http://www.lakewoodhistorical.org).

### EDITOR

Dave Sclair  
e-mail: dsclair@comcast.net

## President's Message

I really think spring has finally arrived and winter has lost its grip. Another sure sign of spring is the arrival of baseball season. I have high hopes that the Seattle Mariners will have a good year, especially with Junior back on the team.

This has been an exceptionally busy month for the Society board. We have put a lot of effort into soliciting our members and city residents for extra contributions in order to meet the operating expenses for the museum this year. I am overwhelmed by your generosity and your support. Unfortunately, we have been unable to reach our goal of \$25,000. That amount is what we need in order to sign next year's lease at the Colonial Center. We are not giving up and have taken several other steps to meet our objective. We are in conversation with the City of Lakewood to see if our hotel tax grant money can be applied to rent and we are negotiating with the property manager for a new lease. We hope these measures are successful and we will report our progress at the "town hall" meeting we are having on April 21. Please be sure to attend to lend your support and offer your suggestions on how we can keep the museum going.

We are pleased to send you our best newsletter yet. It is jam-packed with interesting articles about our local area. There are also some special events worth noting. Of particular interest please be sure to attend the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Ft Steilacoom on May 9 and 10. A lot of work has gone into planning the event and Civil War re-enactors have returned for this special occasion. I also encourage you to visit the Glacial Heritage Preserve south of Olympia on May 9 to celebrate Prairie Appreciation Day. We are fortunate to have areas near us that typify what this whole region looked like for thousands of years before white men arrived. Even with the newsletter having two extra pages we still didn't have room for all of the articles we wanted to share. For more details, please go to our website: [www.lakewoodhistorical.org](http://www.lakewoodhistorical.org).

This year is proving to be one of the most challenging our Society has faced. I am not daunted by the tasks at hand. I know I have the support of our board and members. I am hopeful that we will emerge stronger than before. Because it is only through fire that metal is tempered. Everywhere in America, cities, families and organizations are facing hardships. Every day you hear stories how groups and individuals have stepped forward to meet the needs of their communities. I am proud to be the leader of this organization, a member of our community and a citizen of the United States.

Thank you for your dedication and loyalty.

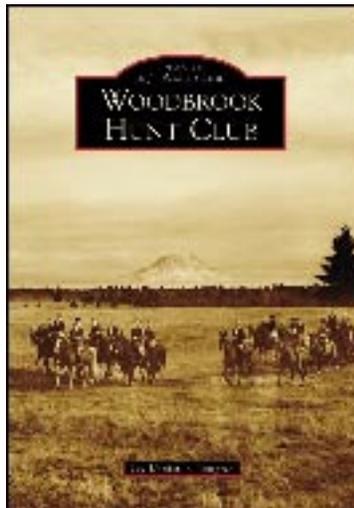
Your humble leader,  
Becky Huber

# Significant Historical Role of Hunt Club Revealed

## New book brings oldest western fox-hunting club to life

New from Arcadia Publishing is Woodbrook Hunt Club, by local author and horseback riding enthusiast Joy Keniston-Longrie. With more than 200 black and white images from an extensive variety of sources, Woodbrook Hunt Club offers a fascinating look at the history of hunting and recreational riding on the southern prairies of Washington State.

The Woodbrook Hunt Club, co-founded in 1926 by Maj. J. H. Mathews and Thornwood Estate superintendent Thomas Bryan, is the oldest fox-hunting club west of the Mississippi. Horses have long played an important historical role on the prairies south of Tacoma. The Nisqually Indians were the first to ride horses on the Nisqually Prairie in the early 1800s followed by the



*Author Joy Keniston-Longrie, a recreational rider and graduate of the University of Washington, is the great-granddaughter of Clay Lincoln Keniston who arrived in Tacoma in 1884 as a blacksmith. Keniston-Longrie combined her passion for history and recreational riding to create this pictorial equestrian history of the prairies in Lakewood, south of Tacoma.*

Hudson's Bay Company and horse-race activities in the 1840s.

The establishment of Fort Lewis in 1917 has protected this unique prairie ecosystem, resulting in a longstanding partnership with the Woodbrook Hunt Club. Today the club continues its rich tradition on the last remaining three percent of native prairie in the Puget Sound Corridor.

Joy Keniston - Longrie will present "History of the Woodbrook Hunt Club" for the Lakewood Historical Society on Tuesday, May 19 at 7 pm at the Lakewood Library, 6300 Wildaire Rd SW.

A book signing will follow. The Public is welcome to attend the monthly meeting of the society and hear the lecture.

### ***Lakewood Historical Society Programs and Activities***

**April 21** - 7 pm: What does the future hold for the Lakewood History Museum? City of Lakewood City Hall, Council Chambers, 6000 Main Street SW, in Lakewood Towne Center. Board members will give Society members and Lakewood community the opportunity to discuss the future of the Lakewood History Museum.

**May 19** - 7 pm: History of Woodbrook Hunt Club, Lakewood Library, 6300 Wildaire Road SW. Joy Keniston-Longrie, author of the latest Arcadia Press book, will present the history of the oldest western fox-hunting club establishing in 1926.

**June 16** - 7 pm: Historic Carman House Tour. Originally built in 1910 and currently owned by Bob Mitchell who has just completed an extensive restoration of the property. Limited to Members Only.

**June 20** - 12 noon-6 pm: City of Lakewood SummerFEST at Ft Steilacoom Park. The Society will once again participate in this community event. New this year will be personally guided tours of Ft Steilacoom Park with emphasis on the historic areas related to Western State Hospital, including the newly restored Hill Ward site.

### ***Other Local Area Activities and Events***

**April 18** - 9 am -12 noon: Parks Appreciation Day, all parks in Pierce County have activities to celebrate Earth Day.

**May 9** - 10 am-3 pm: Prairie Appreciation Day, Glacier Heritage Preserve, south of Olympia at Exit 95. For more information go to [www.prairieappreciationday.org](http://www.prairieappreciationday.org). Step back in time to see what this area looked like before civilization encroached on nature.

**May 9-10** - Sat 9 am-5 pm, Sun 9 am-3 pm: Historic Ft Steilacoom 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Ft Steilacoom Park, Go to: [Steilacoom160.info](http://Steilacoom160.info) or Historic Ft Steilacoom Association's website [www.historicftsteilacoom.com](http://www.historicftsteilacoom.com).

# ***Prairie Appreciation Day*** ***Saturday, May 9***



The protectors and fans of the South Sound prairie celebrate together each year with Prairie Appreciation Day, an all-day, outdoor party at the peak of the Camas bloom.

“Prairie Appreciation Day is a really special event for me,” says Eric Delvin, the Nature Conservancy’s Thurston County Project Manager. “It’s a touchstone activity of outreach and community appreciation in the region. It’s an event started by volunteers and sustained by volunteers for more than ten years. Last year we had 750 people come out and enjoy the day and get a sense of what prairies are and why they are worth preserving.”

Children, especially, love

**Page 4**

Prairie Day. Volunteers and staff members from all the South Sound conservation partners set up tents all over the Glacial Heritage Preserve, inviting children and their parents to take part in a day of learning and prairie fun. It’s something like a cross between a big outdoor classroom and a big birthday party, with children laughing and waving wind wands one minute and focusing seriously on digging up a camas bulb the next.

At the 2008 Prairie Appreciation Day, people of all stripes planted wildflowers, learned a little botany, pulled invasive species, held beetles, netted and released butterflies, walked in the woods, and teased a giant blue gopher

that wandered the prairie all day. At a time when children don’t always have a sustained connection to nature, Prairie Day offers a chance to jump-start a child’s dormant enthusiasm for exploring the outdoors.

The 2009 Prairie Appreciation Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, from 10 am-3 pm. Visit these websites for more information. Go to [prairieappreciationday.org](http://prairieappreciationday.org) for details on this year’s activities, [Nature Conservancy-www.nature.org](http://NatureConservancy-www.nature.org), [landscape.org](http://landscape.org) (site where the above article was found), [southsoundprairies.org](http://southsoundprairies.org), and [pbase.com](http://pbase.com) that contains fantastic photos of the South Sound Prairies by Rob Gilbert.

# ***First homesteaders found Land of Plenty***

**By Chris Reiter**

When homesteaders from the Midwest first arrived in the South Puget Sound lowlands in the 1840s, they saw a vast, wide-open prairie that may well have reminded them of home. Here, in the rugged Washington wilderness was a rolling landscape of knee-high grasses and wildflowers and spacious groves of gnarled oaks. There were deer and elk, hawks and larks, and if the settlers had arrived in the spring, a profusion of berries and flowering plants.

In May, in particular, there were magnificent blooms of wildflowers, especially the abundant Blue Camas, which was a major food source for the Upper Chehalis and Cowlitz people, who lived on the prairies south of Puget Sound. Following the Camas bloom came Golden Paintbrush and Western Buttercup, and later in the spring, enormous crops of strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries. There were thimble berries on the prairie edge and salmon berries on the creeks that flowed to the Chehalis River, where, in the fall, men fished for salmon.

Linda Storm, an ethnobotanist who studies the long relationship between plants and people on the South

Sound prairies, describes the Upper Chehalis territory as “a land of plenty.” She notes the testimony of Mary Heck, a 92-year old Upper Chehalis elder, who recalled in 1927 how the prairies had “abounded with all kinds of roots they used for food...and medicinal purposes.” There were so many strawberries, she said, “you could smell it from a distance.” They ate wild rhubarb, carrots, spinach, crabapples, blueberries, wild currants, and three kinds of camas. And then there were those salmon, swimming upriver, one on top of another.

When Dale Rutledge, a South Sound farmer, was growing up on the prairie in the 1920s the salmon were still running strong. “My older brother and my younger sister and I used to walk through the woods and spend a lot of time down by the river,” he recalls. “We would swim in the summer, and in the fall, watch the many, many salmon coming upstream.” In the spring he enjoyed “the way the wildflowers looked carpeting the prairie.” He has always “had a sentiment for the land.”

Dale’s family came to the Washington Territory from Indiana in 1851. After “selling everything” his grandfather and his father “went up to

Council Bluffs, Iowa, for the trip across the plains. It took them that winter and the early spring to get ready...and then they traveled five months to get here from Council Bluffs.”

The Rutledge’s settled near Littlerock, Washington, south of Olympia, and homesteaded on 160 acres of prairie and fertile bottomland along the Black River. Dale was born in the house his grandfather built and, at 87, still lives there today. As a child, he worked the farm with his father, milking cows, harvesting hay, and thrashing grain. “We raised just about everything,” he said. And even during the Depression, when his mother made his shirts from dyed muslin feed sacks, he “never went hungry.”

“My mother canned anything she could get her hands on....And of course we had our own eggs, and our own milk and beef. So we had a good living. We didn’t have any money, but eating is the better part of living anyway.”

**Join the  
Lakewood Historical Society  
and help preserve  
our history.  
Lakewood Historical Society  
Call 253-682-3480  
6211 Mount Tacoma Dr. SW,  
Lakewood 98499**

**Western State Hospital's Hill Ward  
as it appeared when it was in full use.**



**Join the Lakewood Historical Society for guided site tours at SummerFEST on June 20.**

## Western State Hospital's Hill Ward a shadow of its past

*By Brent Champaco*

The News Tribune 3/13/09

A public memorial is now in place where Western State Hospital's Hill Ward once stood. Lakewood residents remember some of the good times – and scary times – they spent in the ruins.

Thomas Barham did a double-take when he saw the site of the old Hill Ward at Fort Steilacoom Park this week.

“Whoa,” said Barham, 22. “What happened to this place?”

It had been more than a year since the Lakewood resident last visited the 1932-era Western State Hospital building that housed patients who worked on a nearby farm.

After it was abandoned three decades later, Hill Ward became a popular hangout for youths looking to party, contact the supernatural or prey on park visitors.

Barham remembers exploring the dilapidated building when he was younger, from its crumbling walls to what was left of its bathrooms. On Wednesday, he and some friends visited the transformed location, the source of memories for generations of Lakewood residents.

Barham may not be the only one surprised by Hill Ward's new look. The public will have a chance to celebrate the changes at an event this weekend.

Two years ago, the city, the county and the state agreed to pitch in \$693,000 to demolish the building and create a memorial.

Today, Hill Ward has been largely replaced by a raised concrete platform atop the original building's footprint.

Lakewood city employees have worked for the last year to transform it into a quiet, meditative place.

Mary Dodsworth, the city's

parks and recreation director, said the community indicated that it didn't want too prominent a memorial to Hill Ward's history and former inhabitants.

A walkway meanders down the center of the former building's footprint, which residents say resembles an eagle in flight.

The walkway leads to a “labyrinth” that includes a single chunk of the old building. The term labyrinth might be deceiving because there's no confusing collection of walls, just a mazelike pattern where people can walk and reflect.

The original staircases that once led to entrances on either side of Hill Ward now climb up to the memorial, which sits atop a mound of pulverized pieces from the old building.

The city also included two of the original wall sections that are now covered with graffiti.

Dodsworth said the city didn't

clean them because it wanted to maintain their integrity, and they would probably be “tagged” again anyway.

Long-timers might also notice a new trail that loops around Hill Ward and stones that serve as steps for hikers trying to reach the site. (There are wheelchair-accessible ramps as well.)

A piece of the original chimney stands as a marker along the Waughop Lake trail.

By Saturday, the city plans to have signs and a plaque installed.

Hill Ward once housed 300 Western State patients who worked on the old hospital farm. It later became part of Fort Steilacoom Park.

Pierce County crews tore down parts of the building in 1989, although people continued to visit the site.

In summer 2006 it was a hangout for people who preyed on park users. Lakewood police arrested eight people suspected in a series of assaults and robberies. They called themselves Juggalos, followers of the rap group Insane Clown Posse.

The place also was an attraction for fans of the supernatural who believe its grounds are haunted.

“We used to hear voices,” said Deidren Norris of Lakewood, 38. She also used to attend parties at Hill Ward.

“People used to have séances. I totally felt it was haunted.”

Other residents have less spooky memories.

Joanne Pickles, 73, said she remembers hearing stories about the hospital doing shock treatments and other unpleasant procedures on patients.

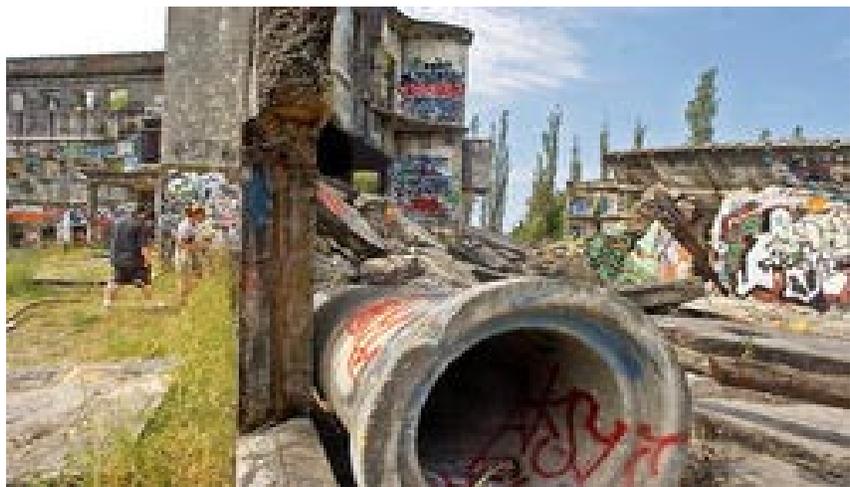
“Kids used to go in and out of it all the time,” the Lakewood resident said. “Even my kids used to sneak up there.”



*After the building was abandoned in the early 1960s, it became a youth party site and troublemakers hideout. News Tribune Photo by Drew Perine*



*A few sections of the original walls have been retained in the memorial created on the site. News Tribune Photo by Drew Perine.*



*In 2006, the ruins of Hill Ward were clogged with debris and covered with graffiti when Heather Duffy and Nate Mendez visited the grounds. News Tribune Photo by Peter Haley*

**LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM  
2009 MUSEUM FUND CONTRIBUTORS**

*April 10, 2009*



***Lakewood History Museum  
Thank You, Fund Donors & Sponsors***

**Gifts: \$9,975**

Goal: \$25,000 by June 30,  
2009 for Operations, Education,  
Exhibits, Programs and  
Community Outreach

City of Lakewood Lodging Tax  
helps support history museum  
promotions, displays & exhibits.

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**LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 FINANCIAL REPORT  
 March 31, 2009**

<b>Cash on Hand</b>	<b>02/28/2009</b>	<b>12/31/2008</b>
Checking	\$ 2579.47	\$ 1556.72
Money Market	\$ 8017.64	\$ 6614.35
Certificate of Deposit	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Total	\$10,597.11	\$ 8171.07
<b>Income</b>	<b>March 2009</b>	<b>3 Months 2009 YTD</b>
Grants	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Memberships	\$ 335.00	\$ 3595.00
Donations - Museum Fund	\$ 3305.00	\$ 6820.00
Sponsorships	\$ 0.00	\$ 250.00
Memorials	\$ 0.00	\$ 1200.00
Special Fund Raisers	\$ 0.00	\$ 40.00
Bank Interest	\$ 7.96	\$ 22.02
Other	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	<u>\$ 60.00</u>
Total Income	\$ 3647.96	\$11,987.02
<b>Expenses</b>		
Operations & Administration	\$ 219.52	\$ 821.15
Web site	\$ 0.00	\$ 105.00
Contract Services	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Insurance	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Museum lease	\$2100.00	\$ 6300.00
Museum exhibits	\$ 14.30	\$ 572.84
Postage, copies & printing	\$ 341.84	\$ 605.58
Museum Annual Fund	\$ 184.48	\$ 184.48
Special Events	\$ 250.00	\$ 350.00
Marketing/Publicity	<u>\$ 455.00</u>	<u>\$ 455.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$3565.14	\$ 9478.16
<b>Closing Cash on Hand 0/31/2009</b>		
Checking	\$ 2654.33	\$ 2654.33
Money Market	<u>\$ 8025.60</u>	<u>\$ 8025.60</u>
Total	\$10,679.93	\$10,697.93
<b>*Reserve for Unpaid 2008 Services</b>		
Consulting Services	<u>(\$5400.00)</u>	<u>(\$5400.00)</u>
<b>Cash Available</b>	\$ 5279.93	\$ 5279.93

\*will be paid when invoice is received

Prepared 04/03/2009

***The Museum is always looking for items  
of historical significance for display!***

Please contact the museum if you have something that should be on display.

Gifts to the society, which is approved as a 501c3 non-profit organization, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

**Lakewood History Museum  
Call 253-682-3480**

**6211 Mount Tacoma Dr. SW, Lakewood 98499**

***New members since  
Winter 2009 Newsletter***

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 Gordon Dowling  
 Margaret Hampson  
 Alma Gray Martin  
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*Lakewood Historical Society*

***NEEDS YOU!***

**Bring your ideas for the future  
of the  
Lakewood Historical Society  
and Museum**

**Lakewood City Hall  
Council Chamber**

**Tuesday, April 21 7 pm**

**The Board of Directors needs your  
input on how to proceed for the future.**

***Don't Miss This Meeting!***

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