



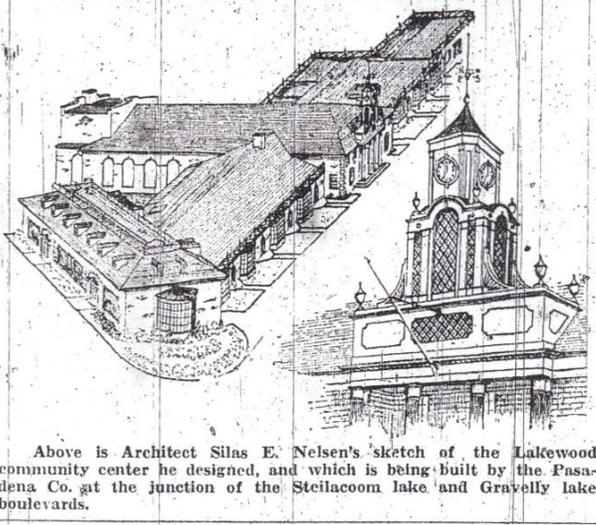
Prairie Gazette



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER, 2011

NEARING COMPLETION



Above is Architect Silas E. Nelsen's sketch of the Lakewood community center he designed, and which is being built by the Pasadena Co. at the junction of the Steilacoom lake and Gravelly lake boulevards.

HISTORIC THEATRE GOES OUT WITH A WHIMPER (part 1)

By Matthew Hulton

On the evening of Thursday July 8, 1937, Norman Clapp's dream became a reality. At 6:00 in the evening, an estimated 3500 citizens of the greater Tacoma area gathered at the red brick veneer and white painted cedar and pine of an esoteric colonial-style building in the middle of Tacoma's outlying prairies for the grand opening of the Lakewood Community Center. Founded by Clapp and designed by architect Silas Nelson, the complex would be one of, if not the first suburban shopping centers to be built west of the Mississippi. Shops included a health and beauty center, grocery and butchers markets, drug store, and what a July 1937 edition

of the Tacoma News Tribune referred to as, "the most beautiful picture theater in the Northwest."

There were many festivities for the opening of the center, which included outdoor performances by local groups the Four Esquires and the Three Radio Rogues. The shops opened their doors, as well as the dining and recreations rooms adjoining the theater. The theater itself, with nearly 600 plush blue seats, christened its silver

screen at 6:30 that evening with the hit romantic comedy *I Met Him in Paris*, starring Claudette Colbert, Robert Young, and Melvyn Douglas. Veteran reel-men H. T. Moore and Sydney Dean played the film twice, to accommodate all of the visitors. Besides being hailed as "one of the finest motion picture houses" in the region, the 24'x28' stage was designed for live theatre as well, complete with orchestra pit and dressing rooms. The theater also boasted a 100 seat balcony and two glassed-in viewing rooms; one to serve as a nursery for children, and the other to oblige those who wished to smoke during performances.

Initially, the "strictly first-class pictures," as the theaters' manager Sidney Dean called them, ran only Friday through Sunday with matinees on Saturdays at 2:30, and Sundays at 3pm. Films were usually

changed on a weekly basis, and admission was only a quarter. The much acclaimed theater would celebrate its one year anniversary with a special weekend long showing of Walt Disney's "magical creation," *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Towards the end of the 1930's, and as the world again teetered on the edge of war, the Lakewood Theatre had the distinction of being the only theater in Tacoma to play European films.

For two decades, the 50 ft. tall spire of the theater was a beacon to both shoppers and movie-goers from all around Tacoma. In a bit of an ironic twist, the Lakewood Center, the forerunner of the urban shopping center in the West, was being overrun by the next generation of urban shopping center, the mini-mall: in 1957, the Villa Plaza opened up, mere walking distance from the colonial-style complex. In 1960, The Lakewood Players, the local acting troupe that called the basement of the Lakewood Theatre home, found a new home. They abandoned the theater and moved to their new location, off of Bridgeport Way, a year later. (Continued on page 3)

Be sure to see the story and full-color photographs of the VILLA MADERA Annual Fundraiser on pages 4 and 5!



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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 at the address listed below.

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

President's Message

This past month has been a whirlwind of activities for the Lakewood Historical Society. However, all of the good things have been tempered by the sad news of the passing of two of our board members.

Brad MacGowan died July 26th at age 81 of a heart attack. He was on our board from 2005-2008 and performed a vital role as a member of the Planning Committee for our Museum. He was also the current Chairman of the City of Lakewood's Landmarks Heritage Advisory Board.

Dave Sclair died **the same day** as Brad at age 73 after a short battle with brain cancer. He was our current Marketing Chair and Newsletter Editor. The last project Dave and I worked on together was coordinating a move to a new location for our program presentations. The Parish Hall at St Mary's Episcopal Church has been a good fit for us and we have thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the welcome given by the church.

The week prior to our BIG EVENT was highlighted by the Museum hosting the Lakewood's Chamber of Commerce monthly "After Hours" complete with food and wine from Lakewood's Stina's Cellars. We had nearly 200 visitors for July, our highest on record. Overall we've had a 44% increase compared to last year. All of the marketing and promotion started by Dave has proven to be very effective.

All of my expectations were exceeded by the success of our fund raising event at **A Walk into History at Villa Madera** on July 31st. It would not have been successful if we hadn't had the help of all of our volunteers. Over 50 people ensured that all of the needs of our guests were met. The addition of 13 soldiers for the 472nd Signal Company, our unit we sponsored last year when they were deployed to Iraq, provided the much needed service of assisting guests, running errands and delivering food. Please be sure to read the special coverage of the event with photos elsewhere in this issue.

Our opportunities for outreach continue to expand. The Heritage League of Pierce County is sponsoring "**Heritage Happens**" for the entire month of September. (See more details elsewhere in the newsletter.) We are fortunate to be able to promote it at the Western Washington Fair so be sure to stop by the booth at the Fair Museum. Drop by our booth on Sat, September 10th for the 3rd Annual **Lakewood Salutes** at the Lakewood Towne Center. We will again participate in the ever popular Lakewood Chamber's **Boo Bash** at Great American Casino on October 26th. See the calendar for more details.

As the saying goes, when God closes a door he opens a window. This has proven to be true in our situation. Just this week I have had not one but two people volunteer to be on the board. I am currently interviewing both of them and we'll be accepting their nominations at our September meeting.

Our future looks full of promise. I am so thankful for the continued support you provide.

Your humble leader,

Becky Huber

P.S. Following the sad loss of our Newsletter editor Dave Sclair, we have a new editor, Stephen Neufeld, who also happens to work as Marketing Executive for The Suburban Times (www.thesubtimes.com) with Dave's son, Ben Sclair, the publisher of The Suburban Times! Say "Hi!" if you see Stephen around town or involved with music ministry at Little Church on the Prairie.





**Werner Dillenburger's
artwork is on display in
Lakewood History
Museum's "Artist Corner"
through September 10th**

As a native of Germany, he had the good fortune to study at the Institute of Graphic Arts in Hanau, Germany. He enjoyed instructions by artists such as Fritz Goering, a well known watercolorist as well as other painters. This led to an assignment in fashion illustration and eventually studies in fashion design and textile engineering.

He came to the United States in 1960 and worked for major companies such as Day's Tailored Clothing Company in Tacoma, WA and Jantzen Swimwear Company in Portland, OR.

Lakewood was his home from 1961 until 1972 and then returned again in 1999.

In 1980 he established his own Sportswear Company in Tacoma and retired several years ago. He is now able to devote his time to what he loves the most--painting with watercolors. In his spare time, he has built several kayaks that he enjoys on the Lakewood lakes and the waters of Puget Sound.

*Thank you to all our
sponsors, donors,
members and visitors!*

Lakewood Theatre (from page 1)

If the new mall and play-house were bad for the Lakewood Center, then what happened a decade later would be catastrophic for the Lakewood Theatre. Almost 32 years to the day that the Lakewood Theatre screened "I Met Him in Paris," on July 1, 1969, the Villa Plaza opened its two-screen Cineplex with Jack Lemmon in *The April Fools*.

In order to compete, the Lakewood Theatre would show films 7 nights a week. The theater made it through the 1970's, relying on the Colonial-style architecture and high-class dining of the adjoining Terrace restaurant to entice citizens to the screen. In mid-December of 1978, the Lakewood Theatre attracted more than local attention when the short-lived Paramount Studios television show "\$weepstake\$" chose the location to cast and film 500 extras chosen for audience-reaction shots inside of the theater.

The ad for the Lakewood Theatre in the TGIF section of the Friday Tacoma News Tribune went from a large ad with a unique font in the late 70's to a mere footnote in the early 80's. By early 1984, it was under the umbrella of the Galaxy Bargain Cinemas, with evening shows for \$2, and matinees for \$1. On Friday, May 25, 1984, the Lakewood Theatre, showing the war drama "Purple Hearts," made its last appearance as a graphic ad. It spent the next three days omitted from the TNT movie listings altogether. On the following two days, it again appeared in its usual spot under the "Suburbs" heading; however no films were listed next to it. On Thursday, May 31, 1984, the Theatre presented "Purple Hearts" at the usual times of 7:00 and 9:05 pm. The following day in the TGIF under the "Suburbs" heading, next to Lakewood Theatre was a single word: "closed." 47 years of serving the community was summed up in one word.

The Colonial Center celebrated its 50th anniversary three years later, and although the theater's tower

and bell were renovated and touched up with a new coat of oyster-white paint, and a 400lb cake was designed to resemble the theater, the theater itself was not used in the celebration. A 78-year-old Norton Clapp returned to the site originally dubbed "Clapp's Folly" to give an outdoor speech about how his iconic structure had been no folly at all and in fact had thrived and helped form the center of the young prairie community.

In December of 2000, the City of Lakewood held its annual Christmas party in the Lakewood Theatre, with Santa Claus on the stage. Since then it has been used sparingly, if at all. (End of Part 1)

**Pierce County History
Being Showcased in
September 2011**

The Heritage League of Pierce County (HLPC) is a consortium of more than 40 organizations that preserve our rich, vibrant heritage. Located throughout Pierce County, these exciting museums, sites and organizations await your visit. Learn about pioneers, Native Americans, agriculture, logging, maritime heritage, and wooden boat building. Take part in re-enactments, education programs, workshops, and hands-on opportunities. Open this passport, plan your adventure and discover that **Heritage Happens.... before you know it, it's History!**

The Lakewood Historical Society has been a member of the HLPC since 2006 and is pleased to be a part of Heritage Happens. The brochures are available at the Lakewood History Museum at 6211 Mt Tacoma Dr SW across from Columbia Bank. Visit as many places during the month of September in order to be eligible for a prize. Start your adventure today. For more information, go to www.piercecountyhistory.org



THE 1920'S RETURN TO LAKEWOOD



Numerous volunteers served as hostesses and tour guides ensuring everyone had a good time.



Sunday afternoon, July 31, 2011, over 200 people descended on the three-acre estate of

VILLA MADERA.

Guests enjoyed the ambience of a bygone era, feasting on fabulous hors d'oeuvres and sipping local wines. The only sounds heard were the strains of piano music and lively conversation. There was a noticeable absence of modern devices, not one cell phone was heard.

Every possible need had been anticipated. Guests were shuttled from the Clover Park High School onto the property by vans supplied by Lakewood Ford (below).



Soldiers (above) from Joint Base Lewis McChord assisted guests to and from the main activity area and provided a constant stream of food, navigating up and down the long flight of stairs from the kitchen.

Once guests arrived on the former tennis court area of the lakefront property, they had the opportunity to visit five different food stations, one large table devoted to desserts alone (below).





Another table (above) displayed a magnificent fresh fruit tower. The liquid refreshments table offered lemonade, iced tea and water for those who chose not to drink wine.

Mutual friends were greeted and introduced to new acquaintances and visitors from out of town. One couple from Florida was lucky enough to attend with their friends from Lakewood. Multiple clusters of people were seated at large tables under the shade of a large tent. Others stood at small tables that offered views of the lake. Couples and individuals strolled the grounds admiring the lush landscaping.



Lots of flapper dresses were in evidence; none was more stunning than the dress worn by our fearless leader, Becky Huber, in a red and purple number with lots of fringe and sequins (above).

The most popular photo op at the event was next to the vintage automobiles, a 1929 Chrysler Roadster on loan from LeMay Family Collection Museum and the 1939 Bentley now owned by the Carman great granddaughter. A lucky few left the event shuttled back to the parking lot in the Bentley (below).



The highlight of the day was a guided tour of the home. Only the downstairs rooms were open to the public but many architectural features and décor original to the home were evident. The Carmans (the original owners) were world travelers and delighted in finding new treasures that made Villa Carman special. Rooms visited included: The Library (below);



Dining Room (above); and, Living Room (below).



The memories will live on with attendees. Next year's event has yet to be decided but, you can count on it being special.

VILLA MADERA is owned by Kyle Smith and Gayle Hampton-Smith (left) who purchased it from Linda Evans in 2002. As quoted by Mr. Smith in an interview at the event, "Gayle found the home of her dreams and...we absolutely love living here and sharing it". It is a spacious Spanish Colonial Revival mansion that looked like it could have been plucked from Santa Barbara, CA or the Mediterranean. Originally known as Villa Carman it was built in 1920 by Joseph Lincoln Carman, a Tacoma businessman. The L.T. Murray's purchased it in 1939 and renamed it Madera. The property was subdivided into spacious lots in 1978 and became known as the gated community "Madera".



Lakewood History Museum

**NEW MEMBERS
January thru July 2011**

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 Walter A. Baade
 Henry W. and Mary E. Backous
 Better Properties Real Estate,
 Towne and Pat Collins
 Phillip Carman
 Cartridge World,
 Steve and Susan Cowpethwaite
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 Keiko Decker
 Patty Ann Forsyth
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 Peter R. Reiner
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 Dennis and Sachiko Roden
 Clara J. (Candy) Stewart
 Gail and Joan Strait
 The Suburban Times, Ben Sclair
 Gary and Helga Thomas
 Barbara Werschkul
 Kitti Wheeler
 Darleen Wilder
 Karen Wiley

Thank You, Museum Fund Donors and Sponsors

2011 Goal: \$25,000 for Operations,
 Education, Exhibits, Programs and
 Community Outreach

Actual: \$17,700 from 147 donors
 plus **\$2,445** in Memorial gifts from
 24 donors - **\$20,145** total

SPONSORS, BUSINESS and ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

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 B&B Glass
 BCRA Design
 Better Properties Real Estate
 Cartridge World
 Comcast
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PREMIER - \$1,000 or more

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 Foundation

PATRON - \$500 to \$999

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 by Margaret J. (Peggy) Bal
 by Patty Ann Forsyth
 by Carl and Ingrid Fynboe
 by John and Rebecca Huber
 by Kris and Sylvia Kauffman
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 by Eugene K. Maun
 by Lisette C. Meyer
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 by Mathew D. Miller and
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 by Frances and Mayo Prentice
 by Robert and Skaidrite Russ
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 by Bob and Candy Tingstad
 by Sharon M. Wheeler
 by Dorothy Wilhelm
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 by John and Rebecca Huber
 by Gary and Karen Fowler

Brad MacGowen
 by John and Rebecca Huber

Bill Imholt
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T. Olai Hageness
 by Carl and Ingrid Fynboe

Jack Gamble
 by Kris and Sylvia Kauffman

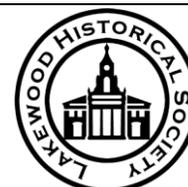
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City of Lakewood Lodging Tax
*helps support history museum
 promotions, displays & exhibits.*



Financial Statement

7 months YTD thru July 31, 2011

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| | Cash on Hand— |
| January 1, 2011: | \$13,875 |
| Income: | |
| Grants | \$20,624 |
| Memberships | \$6,025 |
| Donations, Sponsorships and Memorial gifts | \$13,330 |
| Special Fund Raiser - Villa Madera | \$6,080 |
| Total Income: | \$46,059 |
| Expenses: | |
| Operations, Administration, Insurance and Special events | \$13,646 |
| Contract Services | \$2,496 |
| Museum lease payments | \$10,500 |
| Museum exhibits | \$3,095 |
| Marketing/Publicity | \$9,426 |
| Total Expenses: | \$39,163 |
| | Cash on Hand— |
| July 31, 2011: | \$20,771 |

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

NonProfit Org
US Postage Paid
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~Programs and Events~

Visit museums during September for *Heritage Happens: Before you know it... it's history!*

Sat, Sept 10th, 10 am-4 pm: Lakewood Salutes at Lakewood Towne Center

Thurs, Sept 15th, 6-7:30 pm: Lakes High School Grand Opening Celebration at Lakes High School

Tues, Sept 20th, 7 pm: Reconciling the "Tacoma Method", presented by Former Tacoma Mayor Bill Baarsma. Update on Reconciliation Park and the Chinese Expulsion in 1885.

Remember, monthly meetings are held in our new location in the Parish Hall at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to the Lakewood Library.

*****Check out our website for more information and current events*****

www.LakewoodHistorical.org



Lakewood History Museum

6211 Mount Tacoma Drive SW

253.682.3480

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

Museum Hours:

12 to 4 pm

Wednesday thru Saturday

Group Tours arranged by appointment