



Prairie Gazette

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A look back at Lakewood in the Roaring Twenties

True, most of us can't wait to put it behind us, but we'd be remiss to let 2020 go by without noting it's the centennial of the year that kicked off one of the 20th Century's most fondly remember decades—one that saw the Lakes District coming into its own...

The Twenties of the 21st Century may have kicked off more whimpering than roaring, but there are a few intriguing parallels between these two decades separated by 100 years. First and foremost:

Twin Pandemics

We associate the so-called "Spanish" flu and its 50 million victims with World War I and its immediate aftermath, but the pandemic actually lingered on until April 1920.

Unfortunately, predictions a century later that the corona virus would likewise disappear in April proved woefully over-optimistic. More unfortunate still from our perspective is the difference in impact. 100 years ago, then sparsely-populated Washington had one of the lowest infection rates in the nation. With COVID, our state was first to have an outbreak, first to be a hotspot and, as of publication, with the rate of new infections soaring, far from out of the woods.

Advances in medicine, sanitation and public health make it likely the death toll for COVID-19 will be far lower, here and around the world, than it was in the previous pandemic—and a safe and effective vaccine looks to be available in a few more months.



Who can imagine the Roaring Twenties without jazz and the dance crazes that went along with it? In Lakewood, **the** place for both was **Ingleside Sunken Gardens** in Ponders (above). Noted for its elaborate decor of murals and lattice work, local flappers and lounge lizards could Charleston or Black Bottom the night away to the hot tunes of the **Ingleside Orchestra**.

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PRAIRIE GAZETTE

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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

I hope everyone is doing well—

this certainly has been a crazy year!! The museum is still closed, but work is still going on with our museum consultant—I think you are going to be very pleased with the results! We are looking at reopening in mid-January. Thanks to all those members who have “stuck” with us.

With the unfortunate passing of our long time Treasurer, **Jim Curley**, it has been difficult to keep up with everything Jim took care of. We “advertised” in the *SubTimes* for a volunteer to assist us and two people applied. **Dolores “Dolly” Wild** has a background in accounts receivable and property management and we are looking forward to working with her.

I hope all of you have a pleasant Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas.

**City of Lakewood's
“Reverse” Parade of Lights**

Dec. 12, 2020 **6:00–8:00pm**

**Perimeter Road
Lakewood Towne Center
Enter behind Panera Bread**

Light up your holidays by viewing our “reverse” parade from the comfort of your car. Viewers drive by and view the delightfully lit and decorated floats that are placed along Perimeter Road at the Lakewood Towne Center

ROARING 20s from page one

Was the lifting of the ever-present death threat posed by the first pandemic at least partly responsible for the giddy, devil-may-care attitude we associate with the Roaring Twenties? Will the eventual conquest of COVID unleash similar gaiety in these troubled times of ours?

Given how quickly and thoroughly the world put the horrors of the Spanish Flu behind it, it's likely no historian even asked the first question. As for the second, although the dark turns history has taken since make a return to the



naive, carefree optimism of the 1920s seem highly unlikely, only time will tell.

Boom Times

The 1920's ushered in an era of unprecedented prosperity across America. Sparsely populated areas, especially in the west, saw rapid growth and development—and Pierce County was no exception.

In 1920, Washington had been a state for just 31 years. Barring a spike during the Alaskan Gold Rush, population growth had been steady but slow—the unspectacular outcome of that nationwide phenomenon white Americans called, with some arrogance, “manifest destiny” or more plainly, westward expansionism.

Thanks to the railroads, growth accelerated and spread to previously untouched corners of the nation like the Pacific Northwest. The proof is in the census: in 1890 the population of Pierce

County stood at 50,940. By 1920 it had ballooned to 144,127—a growth rate of 282%.



Impressive, but more than matched 100 years later. For much of 2019, ours was *the* fastest growing county in the nation!

Enter the Leisure Class

One big difference though: talk of spectacular growth in 2020 is largely confined to more people needing more housing. Back in 1920 growth

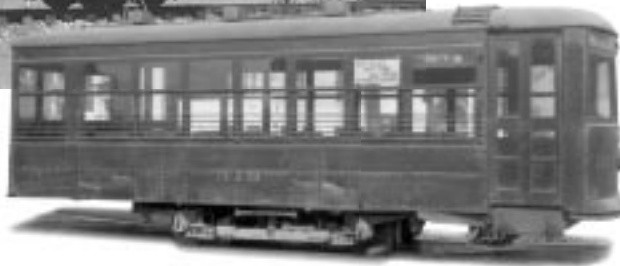
in an undeveloped region like Pierce County meant more factories, more stores, more housing for employees and consumers—all of which called for more wood for more construction. The timber business was booming as never before.

This boded well for the Weyerhaeusers and other timber barons who made their homes in Tacoma. But ironically, the very businesses that had them rolling in disposable income also often had them gagging for breath. Sometimes the city's thick smoke and pulp mill aroma demanded an escape, if only temporarily.

The Lakes District was the perfect next-door getaway the leisure class was looking for.

Water sports, woodland solitude, prairie rambling, fishing, hunting, riding—plus the nation's second-oldest golf and country club—all as near as the closest trolley stop.

Many a city-dweller of more modest means had pitched their tent or rented a cottage on one of south Pierce County's many lakes, even before the turn of the 20th century, but the notion of the



Top: Thanks to uniformity of design, the long-gone Lakeview train station, where visitors to the South Sound would've disembarked, would've been identical to this midwestern example.

Middle: To get a feel for the land, visitors might next board a local trolley—like the one seen here crossing a Lakes District prairie (complete with stubborn cow).

Bottom: The prairie hadn't changed much since 1907 when the middle photo was taken, but by 1925 Lakes District streetcars looked more like this up-to-date addition to Tacoma's fleet.

Lakes as Tacoma's playground really took off in the Roaring 20s.

Take the **Woodbrook Hunt Club** for instance. Tracing its origins back to 1911, the club wasn't duly organized under that name until 1926—after which so many new members signed up the club quickly outgrew its original home in South Tacoma. A much larger spread was purchased in 1929 near today's Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

Horsemen—and golfers—appreciated the broad, flat prairies of the Lakes District, something of a rarity in western Washington, but most weekend vacationers found the big, water-filled holes dug by the glaciers of the last ice age more appealing. Vacation cabins dotted the shorelines of American, Steilacoom and a few other smaller lakes. A number of them still stand, converted to uses ranging from tool sheds to homes in small but exclusive **Lakeside Country Club**.

Think Bigger, Play Harder

By the twenties, increasing numbers of pleasure-seekers attracted developers with bigger ambitions than building vacation cabins. Among them, members of the **DeKoven family**, local entrepreneurs who bought a defunct boys' school, gave it the family name and reopened it as a resort on the east shore of Lake Steilacoom. The DeKoven Inn hosted some sizeable functions, as seen in the photo on page 9—but sadly, not for long. The inn burned down August 2, 1925 and its land was subdivided into lots for summer homes.



1926: Major J. E. Mathews, one of the founders of the Woodbrook Hunt Club, and friend.

Even at the height of its success the DeKoven's inn was hard-pressed to compete with nearby **Oakes Pavilion** as a lure for fun-seekers.

Opening at the southern end of Lake Steilacoom in 1923, the Oakes' roped-off swimming area complete with lifeguards and high-dive platforms was just one of its attractions. A huge dance floor with a bandstand large enough to accommodate the big bands of the era soon attracted big names like **Tommy Dorsey** and **Duke Ellington**.

Less than a year after it opened, the Oakes somehow managed to snare the swimming trials for the 1924 Paris Olympics. Among those trying out was a sensational youngster named **Johnny**

See *ROARING 20s* pg 9



**Donors of \$50 or more—
There's an ornament
waiting for you!**

Sue Scott will be at the
Museum (6114 Motor Ave SW)
on 8 December & 16 December
from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
for ornament pick up.

A 20s Timeline of other significant Lakewood events

- 1920: LAKE CITY COMMUNITY CLUB.** Residents of Lake City subscribe funds to buy land, move old city school building for use as their club house.
- 1920: TILlicum GETS ITS NAME** from Chinook jargon word meaning “friend.”
- 1921: INGLESIDE SUNKEN GARDENS** opens (see photo & caption, page one.)
- 1922: LAKE CITY CHURCH** formed, incorporating previous Holt Chapel.
- 1922: CAMP MURRAY**, established as military training site in 1889, made headquarters of Washington National Guard.
- 1922: JAMES RUSSELL**, future Admiral and perhaps Lakewood’s most distinguished contribution to the ranks of the military, enrolls in the Naval Academy.
- 1923: VETERANS HOSPITAL** established on 377 leased acres by the War Department for “a medical center for neuropsychiatric treatment only.”
- 1924: FIRST PATIENTS ARRIVE AT VA HOSPITAL.** 50 World War I veterans are transferred from Western State Hospital.
- 1924: VISITATION SCHOOL FOR GIRLS** founded by Visitation Sisters on 100 acre property along Gravelly Lake Drive. Site becomes home to Villa Plaza shopping center in 1957, is now Lakewood Towne Center.
- 1925: BOXING EXHIBITION** featuring welterweight Ray Tingrey, lightweight Ray Small and other boxers draws big crowd to Garrison’s Place (later, Bill’s Boathouse) on American Lake.
- 1927: LAKE CITY CHURCH AUDITORIUM** dedicated on January 1st.
- 1927: CHESTER THORNE DIES**, financial kingpin and builder of Thornewood Castle.
- 1928: LAKES DISTRICT DOWN TO JUST TWO TROLLEY LINES**, Tacoma Rail & Power Company’s run from Tacoma to Steilacoom (longest electric line in the world at the time it was established: 12 miles) and Pacific Traction’s run from Tacoma to American Lake.
- 1928: METEOR STRIKES TACOMA COUNTRY & GOLF CLUB**—maybe. Many reports of fireball on the night of June 16. Next day, claims are made that metal fragments were recovered from the golf course. Supposedly given to College of Puget Sound (now UPS) for study. Not there today, no record of transaction.
- 1929: AMERICAN LAKE INN BURNS.** Open since 1904, shoreline resort had twenty rooms, pavilion, boat house, bath house, steam launch to give guests lake tours.



Early aerial photo shows the resort on American Lake in 1920. The Inn itself is at top of photo, just visible through the trees. Below it are the pavilion, boat house and other structures



Heather Hill, on the other hand, could hardly have been more traditional in design. Cutter specified Wilkeson sandstone, locally famous for both its quality and beauty, for his fine example of English Cotswold Cottage style.

Rhodesleigh, below, was the product of Heath, Gove & Bell, another local and highly-regarded firm of architects.

The home's story begins on a sad note—Henry A. Rhodes, founder of the local department stores that bore his name from 1903 to 1974, built Rhodesleigh as a memorial to his son Edward, killed in World War I.

Construction began on the 12,600 square foot mansion on a site near Lake Steilacoom, June 30, 1921.



The Roaring Twenties

saw the construction of some of Lakewood's most distinctive—and expensive—homes.

Noted architect Kirtland Cutter, pictured at top, was responsible for at least two of them: **Villa Carman** (now Villa Madera), built for mattress manufacturer and world traveler Joseph Carman in 1920, and **Heather Hill**, top right, completed in 1922 for lumber magnate Ernest Dolge. Both estates reside on the shores of Gravelly Lake.

At Carman's request, Cutter's design took "villa" literally, resulting in a faux-hacienda that would have been more at home in sunny Spain than in the soggy Northwest. But muy grandé it undeniably was—on 18 beautifully landscaped acres, with six fireplaces, 18 foot ceilings in the living room, and a Mediterranean-style courtyard (left). Joe and wife Margaret became locally famous for the fabulous parties they threw at their one-of-a-kind home.

Black & white photos from Tacoma Public Library digital archives. Photo of Joseph Carman modified to remove obscuring persons and objects.

LHS Members Visit Glacier National Park and Whitefish, Montana

by Phil Raschke

Whitefish is a charming town of 8,000 folks famous for its ski resort and nearness to Glacier National Park.

The town was settled in 1883 and the railroad came in 1904. The town was originally known as Stumptown because of the heavy logging industry. Several Native American tribes inhabited the area prior to the arrival of European settlers. Western author **Dorothy M. Johnson**, who began writing as a student at Whitefish High School in 1918, rests in the Whitefish Cemetery. Her famous books that also became famous motion pictures in-



The "Glacier Five" travel group surround the famous Continental Divide marker at Logan Pass. L-R are Doug Kotrba, Jeanie Kotrba, Phil Raschke, Bev Raschke and Heinz Haskins.

clude *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *The Hanging Tree*, and *A Man Called Horse*.

Glacier National Park was created in May, 1910 and the famous "Going to the Sun" road which crosses the center of the Park was completed in 1932. The Park comprises over 1 million acres of pristine land and shares its north-

ern boarder with the **Waterton National Park** in Canada.



The American Continental Divide passes through Glacier National Park and is marked at Logan Pass. As you may know, a Divide is a line that divides the flow of water between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Rain or snow that drains on the east side of the Divide flows toward the Atlantic Ocean. Precipitation on the west side drains toward the Pacific Ocean.

The Park's mountains began forming about



The historic Whitefish Train Station is the jumping off point for tourists arriving aboard Amtrak's "Empire Builder" from Seattle. Newly arriving Museum members include (L-R) Phil Raschke, Beverly Raschke and Heinz Haskins displaying a copy of the "Prairie Gazette" newsletter.



170 million years ago and hundreds of glaciers existed during the Ice Age which ended about 10,000 years ago.

Today, only about 25 small active glaciers exist in the Park. However, massive evidence of glacial action is found throughout the park in the form of U-shaped valleys, large lakes and radiating fingers from the base of high peaks. Also, early volcanic action millions of years ago have produced rocks containing excellent examples of early fossil life on our planet.

Left: The "Glacier Five" group pose in the lobby of their hotel after a day's journey into the park. Heinz Haskins (on right) once again promoting our "Prairie Gazette".

ROARING 20s from pg 4



Weissmuller (above, at the trials). Not only did he go on to win three golds and a bronze in Paris (plus two more golds four years later in Amsterdam), in 1932 Weissmuller dove into fame on the silver screen as *Tarzan, the Ape Man*.

More about Lakewood as the South Sound's 1920's playground in our next issue, Winter 2021



1925: The National Bank of Tacoma's annual picnic for employees at the DeKoven Inn on Lake Steilacoom.



The Oakes Pavilion and swimming area circa 1925.

Recent Donors

Aletha & Albert Grace
Bob & Cindy Tingstad
Laura Durand-Gordon
Andie Gernon
Kathy Spencer
Joan Cooley
Bill Harrison

Kristin Davis + a donation in
memory of Jim Curley

And Welcome to Our New Members

Travis Campbell
Mike Hall
Steve Lowe



And the Winner Is....

Story and Photos by Phil Raschke

During the early Summer months your Lakewood Historical Society conducted its annual membership drive. This year any member who donated \$50 or more was entered into a drawing for one of the Museum's new blue and white sweatshirts. Over 70 members entered the drawing and Museum Docent **Bill Emma** volunteered to draw the winning name. And the winner is... **Sarah Woodall** of Lakewood! Congratulations Sarah and thank you for your continuing support.

Additionally, all members who donated at the \$50 level will be given a beautiful, gold Lakewood History Museum ornament. The ornament features the historic Lakewood Theatre which is adjacent to our new museum home. Ornaments will be available for pickup soon and recipients will be individually advised of the pickup schedule.

The Museum also wants to thank everyone who participated in this year's membership drive. It was a huge success! And we look forward to welcoming each of you to our new location when our opening is announced. Meanwhile, stay safe and be sure to give a virtual hug or two to a needy friend.



(L to R) Board member Jim Schell, Consultant Chris Erlich, President Sue Scott, Docent Bill Emma, Board member Glen Spieth. Bill drew Sarah's winning name from over 70 entries.

Lakewood History Museum "Preserving Yesterday, Educating Tomorrow!"



Work is continuing on upgrades and improvements to our new museum location.

Pictured on ladder is Museum Consultant **Chris Erlich** connecting new partitions assisted by Docent **Bill Emma** who is tasked with keeping everything straight and steady.

There will be lots of exciting new things when the museum is finally ready to open.

More details coming soon.

Photo by Phil Raschke



Historical Markers of

Lakewood: 7th in a Series.

Lakewold Gardens



If you've yet to visit the most beautiful and, in the field of landscape architecture, historically significant attraction Lakewood has to offer, there's no time like the present. Most spectacular in spring and summer, its profusion of evergreens in a serene and lovely setting makes Lakewold a rewarding experience on even the gloomiest winter's day.

When you arrive, walk just north of the gift shop to find a plaque set in stone (*left*), one of over twenty historical markers placed by your Lakewood Historical Society since 2002—with more to come.

Jointly funded by the Society and the City of Lakewood, the marker was dedicated in 2014 by **Mayor Don Anderson** before a gathering of LHS members and friends. Featuring a picture of the Griggs/Wagner house as it appeared nearly a century ago, the text reads as follows:



LAKEWOLD

The Northern Pacific Railroad Company got federal land grants around Lakewood to use to bring the railroad to Tacoma in the 1870s. The land around Gravelly Lake was not needed so the Tacoma Land & Improvement Company platted the land and sold to individuals. One five acre lot was purchased by Emma Alexander for a summer home in 1908. In 1918, Mrs. Alexander transferred the property to her son, Tacoma shipping magnate Hubbard F Alexander (Alexander Steamship Line). He and his wife used the house as a country retreat and purchased an additional five acres next door.

Major Everett Griggs bought the property (ten acres) in 1925 and named it Lakewold (meaning lake-woods). He sold the property to Corydon Wagner in 1938. His wife, Eulalie Wagner, created the gardens. The property was designated historic by the City of Lakewood in 2002 and is now open to the public as a non-profit known as Lakewold Gardens.



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Historical
Society**
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Check www.lakewoodhistorical.org for notices about upcoming programs.