

Footprints

on the sands of time....

Issue VI

SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DECEMBER 1988

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVES

By: Clay Eals

It Makes a good joke that I quit my newspaper job, left on a five-week tour of Great Britain, then returned to West Seattle only to find myself elected in my absence as the new president of the historical society. That's the only way to elect new leaders, the joke goes -when they're gone.

The truth is, I knew it was possible before I left. Elliott Couden had indicated he wanted to scale back his involvement, and a nominating committee that initially included me was in the middle of its work when I jumped on a plane bound for London.

I take the new job with enthusiasm and a little sadness. The enthusiasm is easy. I love local history and take pride in having had the opportunity to play a big role in documenting that history in the "West Side Story" book. The long-neglected Duwamish peninsula now has a comprehensive, lively account of its past that goes way beyond the usually token mention of the Denny Party landing in most Seattle histories.

The tinge of sadness comes from Elliott's decision to step down. A dedicated, headstrong man with history in his heart, Elliott almost single-handedly launched this society with an energy and determination, leavened by the sense of humor of a seasoned salesman, that would leave others of his years in the dust. His buttonholing skill and eye for detail were just what this organization needed to get off the ground. Without Elliott, we would have no 150 members, no by-laws, no strong relationship with South Seattle Community College, no stature within West Seattle and White Center and within the King County historical community. We still would be only a good idea, a dream.

I'm glad Elliott has decided to retain the secretary's post. He will also continue as editor of "Footprints," his widely praised baby; it's a task that brings him joy. By keeping those roles, Elliott will stay well-informed and bring invaluable guidance and inspiration, not to mention continuity, to the rest of us.

Many long-term goals for this society. For instance, we need to build our collection of photos and artifacts and nail down a permanent place (dare we call it a museum yet?) to store and display them properly. But these things take time, and I'll be satisfied if we chip away at them while we get on with the next logical phase of our evolution — to get our bulging membership working on meaningful, short-term projects that will prove satisfying and heighten public awareness of the value of a preserved community heritage.

The perfect vehicle for that is the state's Centennial. I'm convinced we must capitalize on the public interest in history that is being cultivated by the year-long, statewide celebration that is upon us. Our Dec. 10th cruise will be a terrific start. The next is to harness the enthusiasm of the cruise and put it to work. That's what our Centennial planning meeting on Jan. 10th (SSCC board room, 7 p.m.) is all about.

Those of you who have been waiting to plunge into a project that's both rewarding and manageable, here's your chance. I hope to see you, not only on the cruise but also Jan. 10th. Let's put together a post-cruise list of Centennial projects we can all be proud of.

Elliott, the other officers and I are rarin' to go.

PLANNING MEETING

What Will we do for the Centennial *after* our cruise?

We'll answer that question on Tuesday, Jan. 10th. That's when we're inviting all members, representatives of the area's service clubs and community organizations and any other interested persons to a Centennial planning meeting.

It will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at the South Seattle Community College board room, 6000 16th Ave. S.W. (RS-30)

At the meeting, we'll assemble a list of

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Centennial project ideas, identify the most popular ones, then set subcommittees to work on specific plans.

Several ideas have surfaced already. They include a springtime Tour of Historic Homes, a series of evening programs on West Seattle and White Center history, a summertime slate of historical skits, and a re-enactment of the landing of the schooner Exact on Alki Beach.

But those aren't the only ideas. Bring yours, and help out on the ones you like the best.

The seats are comfortable, coffee and tea will be on, and other refreshments will be served. Don't miss out on this chance to plan our local Centennial events.

ANNUAL MEETING BRIEFS

At Its Fourth Annual Meeting on October 6, 1988, the following were elected to office:

Clay Eals, *President*

Neal Lockett, *Vice-President*

Elliott N. Couden, *Secretary*

John C. Ashford, *Treasurer*

TRUSTEES:

Florence "Flo" Lentz

Dr. Aurlo A. Bonney

Reports included the forthcoming Centennial Cruise on the Virginia V, on December 10, 1988; the successful restoration of the Alki Beach Statue of Liberty replica; and action on the "Weatherwatch" project.

Honorary memberships were bestowed upon the Hon. Lawrence J. Pierce, and early White Center resident Ethel Green Brown.

"Flo" Lentz presented an interesting resume of the origins and developments in historic preservation over the years.

(Editors Note: In mid-November Mr. Couden submitted his resignation as President for the short remainder of his term so that he could devote full energy to the Secretary's portfolio. The Executive Board then filled the vacancy with President-elect Eals.)

FOOTPRINTS

Newsletter of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society.

c/o SSSC, 6000 - 16th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98106

Editor: Elliott N. Couden

Editorial Board: Margaret Mary Davis, Clay Eals, John F. Van Gilder.

CENTENNIAL FERRY CRUISE

Tickets Still remain for this month's gala Washington State Centennial Ferry Cruise, sponsored by our historical society.

By now most of you have heard about the Saturday, Dec. 10, cruise. You've gotten a bulletin in the mail, been alerted on the phone, contacted in person or seen mention of it in the newspapers and other media.

Interest is high, but the number of reservations still exceeds the number of paid-for tickets. Those of you who have reserved space on the boat, please send your check in today to insure your boarding.

Those of you who want to come along but have postponed a final decision, now is the time to send in your check, while tickets still remain. And those of you who have bought tickets already, how about bringing along another friend or relative for a holiday treat?

Tickets are \$25, and only 250 are available. Mail your check, payable to the Southwest Seattle Historical Society, to the society c/o South Seattle Community College, 6000 16th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98106.

The cruise will be a big party to commemorate 100 years of ferryboating on Puget Sound. It'll take place aboard the historical Virginia V steamer, beginning and ending at Pier 56 on the Seattle waterfront. Boarding will begin at 1, and the boat will shove off at 1:30 and return at 4. Included are:

- * A catered, buffet lunch and a no-host bar.
- * Performances by the Duwamish Dixiland Band.
- * A display on ferryboating history.
- * Tours of Virginia V, including the engine room.
- * A personalized memento, suitable for framing, for every ticketholder.

The first ferry on Puget Sound, called the City of Seattle, had its maiden voyage Dec. 24, 1888, between downtown Seattle and what is now the foot of Ferry Avenue in West Seattle. We'll replicate that route, plus circle the West Seattle peninsula and sail other points of interest on the Sound.

To add to the historical fun, we are encouraging everyone to dress in period costume. Brocklin's, with stores in downtown Seattle and the University District, is a fine source of rental attire. Ann Gunlogson, who works at LaGrace Apparel in the Junction on Mondays and Fridays, can be consulted for advice as well. But please don't be overly worried about accuracy. The idea is to have fun.

Several dignitaries will attend, including King County Council member Greg Nickels and state Sen. Phil Talmadge (D-34th), both members of this society.

Please join us for this once-in-a-century event!

REFLECTIONS

It Has been my privilege to head this society since its formal inception in June, 1984. This year I informed the nominating committee that it was time for new leadership and as a consequence Clay Eals has moved into this role. Clay is a man with demonstrated organizational skills, energy, enthusiasm and vision. I am delighted with the choice. In my new official position as Secretary I shall be part of the team, supportive of Clay and the society.

What a great experience it has been. To take an idea, a dream, and see it head into fruition. I am most optimistic about the future of this endeavor.

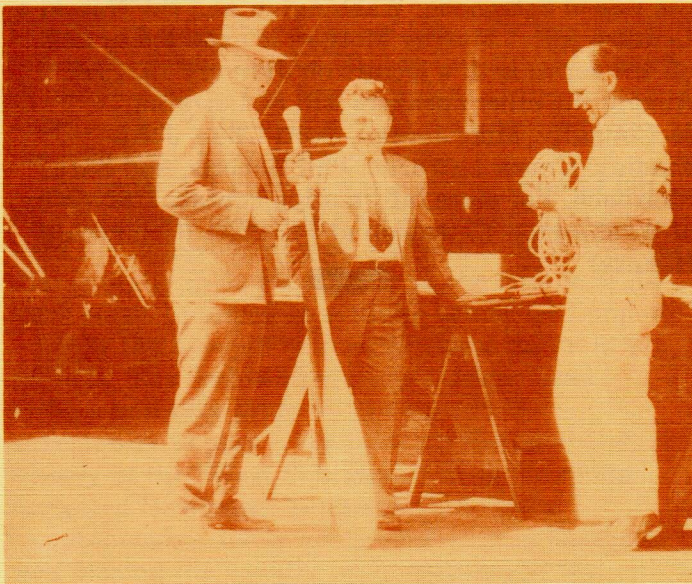
We now have a strong membership base, excellent leadership, a growing collection of historic artifacts, and recognition within both the local and historic preservation communities.

Our original intent of becoming a meaningful educational entity is within reach. It all takes time, but time moves rapidly in this age. It also takes careful planning and participation. The State Centennial year of celebration has now begun. Awareness and appreciation of our heritage will be heightened.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your support and my best wishes in this Advent Season. Have an exciting and fulfilling Centennial Year.

Elliott Couden

FLIGHTS OF FANCY (A/K/A Fancy Flights)



Win Leggitt collection

Will Rogers, Wiley Post and Walt Burrington, NW Air Service foreman, at Renton Airport during change from wheels to floats on Post's Lockheed. . . Just prior to the Post/Rogers fatal crash near Barrow, Alaska, on Aug. 15, 1935.

Because Of the superb products and world-wide recognition of the Boeing Company and Seattle's two international airports, this area has become a hub of aviation lore and expertise. How was it, though, in its formative years? Winston "Win" Leggitt has this to say:

During my eleven years working at Northwest Air Service, I witnessed some fine craftsmanship in the repair and overhaul of airframe and engines. Northwest Air Service was the first licensed aircraft repair station in the northwest area. Said license required the outfit to have suitable shop area, certain special tools, a supply room with engine and aircraft parts and materials. And, of course, licensed mechanics. Bert Seaton was the wood-artist. His box spars and routed solid spars were perfect. Created out of Grade-A spruce . . . clear . . . no pin holes. Ribs to slide onto the spars came out

of his jig better than the factory originals. Next thing was to sit down at the sewing machine and put together a "sock" of several panels of fabric that were slipped over the wing frame. At this point, Bert handed a bucket of dope and a brush to me and anyone else standing around not doing anything. After we brushed on a couple of coats of clear dope and the wings had dried to the tension of a drum-head, Bert would break out his spray gun and lay on a couple of coats of aluminum mixed dope. And of course color was next if required by the plane owner.

The engine shop was manned by equal artisans. Art "Butch" Berger overhauled any and all kinds of combustion power plants brought into the shop. Art's early days were spent for the most part in the service shop for Marmon autos. Automotive magazines would periodically write up the way Art operated his service and repair--always on schedule--and how he kept his domain hospital clean. Woe to the mechanic or flunky that didn't return tools where they belonged or the floor wasn't mopped with hot oakite cleaner. When he had to install an expensive impeller bearing in a large radial aircraft engine he asked everyone of us to leave the room. The clearances and end-play limits were so critical he didn't want any kind of distraction whatever. Practically all the bush pilots and operators in Alaska wanted NW Air Service to do the Alaska overhauling and said they could fly over the worst kind of country and through hellish weather and not worry about the engine bringing them through.

Walt Burrington was the shop foreman. . . aircraft and engine. Walt was our man with the longest time in aircraft service. He started out as crew chief on the flight line at the San Diego naval air station . . . 1917. Walt was all over the place making sure the customer was going to get the best out of NW Air Service.

The largest aircraft we serviced was a Fairchild 100 "Pilgrim". It required tall step ladders to get to access panels and cowl fasteners. From Alaska, of course. Some of the bush pilots would regale us with

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real horror stories of flying up there near the Arctic Circle. A few never returned for their next service or overhaul. Down in the wilds or, as one pilot ended his aerial career, approaching a frozen lake to land and pick up a miner, crashed through the ice because of what they call a "white out". No horizon...end of depth perception.

FRED FLETCHER MOVES

One Of our earliest, and eldest, charter members, Fred J. Fletcher, has left his Beach Drive abode and moved south. His new address is:

2909 Latham Drive,
Sacramento, CA 95864

Fred makes it clear that he will continue his membership. Those of us who know this 90 year old historic preservationist might take a few moments to drop him a line or two.

NEW RESTAURANT COMING

Through Funding in the form of a \$3,000,000 loan from King County, the museum of Flight will construct a restaurant at the museum site.

WANT A BACK ISSUE?

Past Copies of "Footprints" are available to members on request. These include, to date:

Issue I - April, 1987

Issue II - Sept., 1987

Issue III - Jan., 1988

Issue IV - April, 1988

Issue V - Sept., 1988

Just call Mr. Couden at 932-2290.

CENTENNIAL LECTURE SERIES

In Honor of the Washington State Centennial the University of Washington History Department and the Pacific Northwest Historian's Guild are co-sponsoring a lecture/discussion series entitled "On the Eve of Statehood: Washington and the Nation a Century Ago." Murray Morgan is expected to kick off the series with a lecture on January 19, 1989. Among the other speakers will be Lorraine McConaghy, Mike Jordan, Scott Cline, John Findlay, Chuck LeWarne, Phil Roberts, and Sara Sharbach. For more information contact University of Washington Extension at 543-2300. (Community History)

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