

Footprints

on the sands of time....

ISSUE X

SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JANUARY 1990

COME AND HELP PLAN THIS SPRING'S HISTORIC TOUR OF WEST SEATTLE!

As the new decade dawns, so does our planning for 1990. Our potentially biggest event looms just four months away (gulp!).

The event is the Second Annual Tour of Historic West Seattle. No date has been chosen, but last year's inaugural tour took place May 13, one day before Mother's Day.

Peggy Alonso-Thorburn, coordinator of this year's tour, already is searching for homes to include. She and others who will serve on the tour's planning committee must firm up details and start making contacts.

The first meeting of Peggy's committee will be held at 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 11, immediately following our society's monthly Executive Committee meeting, which will convene at 7. Both sessions will be held in the South Seattle Community College Library, 6000 16th Ave. S.W. All members are welcome.

Peggy will get able help from Flo Lentz, coordinator of the 1989 event, which involved more than a dozen local businesses, 50 volunteers, and 400 participants who paid \$5 each to tour the interiors of eight interesting and colorful buildings from West Seattle's past. The tour also featured 13 drive-by sites.

Last year's event netted about \$1,400, proving that



Photo by Elliott Couden

Dwarfed by 82-year-old Hainsworth House at 2657 37th Ave. S.W., state Sen. Phil Talmadge (holding daughter Anne Marie) speaks at the kickoff for last year's tour.

this kind of event can build revenue for our society as well as provide a rare, intimate glimpse of some of the area's most revered structures.

Goals for this year's tour include earlier planning, better publicity and more private homes. Those goals can be realized only with the help of our members.

Please help plan an event that is sure to build on last year's success. If you cannot attend the Jan. 11 meeting, contact Peggy at 937-3511.

MEL OLSON, LONG-REVERED AS 'MR. WHITE CENTER,' DIES AT 77



*Photo courtesy
W.S. Herald*

**Mel Olson
in 1985**

Melvin A. Olson, known as Mr. White Center, died Dec. 11, 1989, after a long battle with diabetes. He was 77.

Olson, who helped found our historical society in 1984, served as our first vice president.

Three times the president of the White Center Chamber of Commerce, Olson championed the paving of Roxbury Street, improvements to the 16th Avenue business strip, cleaning up Lake Hicks and rebuilding fire-ravaged White Center Stadium, which was renamed for Olson in July 1985. About

200 people attended a Dec. 13 memorial service for Olson at the stadium.

Olson, who arrived in White Center in 1918, and his wife Telva, the 1937 Miss White Center, lived across from Highland Park Elementary School from 1939 until 1986, when they moved to Puyallup. Olson's activism began in the 1940s when he organized the White Center Boys Club.

"I have felt that the most you get out of life is what you do for somebody else," he said in a 1985 interview with the West Seattle Herald and White Center News.



(Front to back) Eleanor Pena, Sarah Booth, Aubrey Seffernick, Lindsey Marie Wright, Sara Polansky and Booke Munoz enjoy their ride on



Photos by Clay Eals

the Yankee Clipper. (Right) Lindsay, the youngest descendent, gazes upward as the vessel passes under the West Seattle Bridge.

STAGED LANDING FEELS JUST LIKE THE REAL THING FOR CHILLY CROWD OF 400

Chilling cold and drenching rain greeted participants and onlookers who turned out for our society's State Centennial Celebration at Alki on the afternoon of Nov. 11.

The blustery weather allowed the 21 soaked actors aboard the Yankee Clipper and the shivering audience of 400 at the east end of the Alki Promenade to get a true-to-life taste of how the dreary circumstances of the Nov. 13, 1851, landing of the schooner Exact must have felt.

Organizer Brad Chrisman, a member of our board of trustees, said a sunny day might have attracted upwards of 1,000 spectators, particularly given the event's excellent publicity. But he felt the inclement elements made the 1 p.m. commemorative event (informally dubbed The Finale) all the more memorable for the assembled crowd.

Those who showed up were treated to a skit by the 21 actors, who along with a full Sea Scout crew, braved a rocky ride from Harbor Island Marina around Duwamish Head to the anchor point, from which two smaller

boatloads rowed to the beach. The actors included seven descendents of the original Denny Party.

Chrisman backed up the skit by narrating from a script adapted from a lively text written by the late author Elizabeth Rider Montgomery in 1951. A rented loudspeaker system broadcast the narration to the crowd, and brief welcomes from four speakers, including Norman Perkins, the great-great-grandson of Chief Seattle, added to the authentic flavor.

Following the re-enactment, our society hosted a buffet reception from 4 to 7 p.m. at the mansion of Bob Sumbardo at 1715 Sunset Ave. S.W. About 50 attended the affair, organized by Deb Barker, another member of our board, who also procured the batch of period costumes worn in the re-enactment and handled ship-to-shore communication.

The local events of the day -- Washington state's 100th birthday -- served as a fitting cap to our society's year-long observance of the Centennial. Largely because of its historical authenticity and involvement of the Denny Party descendents, our celebration held its own in the attention the media gave the many events put on around the state on the big day.

All who volunteered their time and effort to make our celebration a success deserve a Centennial-sized round of thanks.

SHORTS: We have two new board members and one new officer, elected at the Oct. 7 annual meeting. They took office Jan. 1.

The board members are **JoAn Schmitz Fulton**, a Beach Drive resident, arts activist and member of the landmark Schmitz family, and **Carol Vincent**, a Genesee Hill resident and active

member of the Save the Admiral Theater Task Force who works at the West Seattle Library.

Fulton and Vincent replace **Allan Cunningham**, a longtime West Seattle businessman who recently moved to Port Townsend to direct the Coast Artillery Museum there, and **Candace Lein-Hayes**, federal (and former state) archivist, who recently gave birth

Following is a listing of the Nov. 11 cast, including names of the 23 members of the original Denny Party, along with the 21 actors who portrayed them in the re-enactment:

ADULTS:

Arthur Denny: R. Denny Wright, great-great-great-grandson of Arthur and Mary Denny.

Mary Denny: Carol Ewens, great-great-great-granddaughter of Arthur and Mary Denny.

Carson Boren: Neal Boren, great-great-great-grandson of Carson and Mary Boren.

Mary Boren: Patricia Boren, great-great-great-granddaughter of Carson and Mary Boren.

David Denny: Stuart Harris, great-great-great-grandson of David Denny and Louisa Boren Denny.

Louisa Boren: Brenda Wilbee, historical novelist and author of the *Sweetbriar* trilogy, based on the lives of David Denny and Louisa Boren Denny.

Lydia Low: Peggy Nugent, great-great-great-granddaughter of John and Lydia Low.

John Low: Tom Nugent, Peggy Nugent's husband.

William Bell: Clay Eals, Southwest Seattle Historical Society president.

Sarah Ann Bell: Karen Wissing, Southwest Seattle Historical Society member.

Charles Terry: Dan Portman, editor, West Seattle Herald/White Center News.

CHILDREN:

Kate Denny: Lindsey Marie Wright, great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Arthur and Mary Denny.

Lenora Denny: Aubrey Seffernick.

Roland Denny: (Doll).

Mary Low: Eleanor Pena.

Alonzo Low: Phillip Kent.

John Low: Blake Kent.

Minerva Low: Sarah Booth.

Gertrude Boren: (Doll).

Laura Bell: Laura Wissing.

Olive Bell: Ashley Seffernick.

Virginia Bell: Sara Polansky.

Levinia Bell: Brook Munoz.

SCHOONER EXACT:

Portrayed by the West Seattle Lions Club's Sea Scout vessel the Yankee Clipper; John Kelly, skipper, and crew.

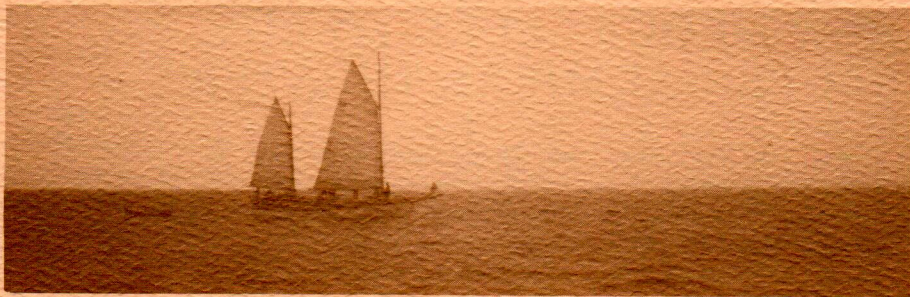
SPEAKERS:

Brenda Wilbee (see above).

Norman Perkins, great-great-grandson of Chief Seattle.

James Rasmussen, Duwamish Tribe.

Ben Boren, great-great-grandson of Carson Boren.



(Top photo)
In full sail, the Yankee Clipper nears Alki Beach prior to the landing.



(Middle photo)
Smiling in a soaked poncho despite the rain, Brad Chrisman listens to greetings by Norman Perkins, descendent of Chief Seattle.

(Bottom photo)
The first of two boatloads from the Yankee Clipper lands on Alki Beach, as part of the crowd of 400 looks on.

Top photo: Elliott Couden
Middle photo: Clay Eals
Bottom photo: Robert Confer



to a daughter, Kelsey. Our best wishes and thanks go to them. The new officer is Treasurer **Joan Mraz**, a White Center resident, co-founder of our society and humanities director at South Seattle Community College. Mraz received a wonderful Christmas present, a successful kidney transplant operation on Dec. 25 after years of dialysis. Owing to recovery, she will not assume her

duties until late February. **John Ashford**, who has served as treasurer since the society's inception in 1984, plans an imminent sabbatical from his librarian's job at SSSC. John, known for his enthusiasm, astuteness, conciliatory nature and dependability, also has served as
(Continued on back page)

NEW GROUP SEEKS TO BUY, REOPEN ADMIRAL THEATER

The effort to save the landmark Admiral Theater gained new momentum last month. A new organization called the Admiral Theater Restoration and Renaissance Association (ATRRRA) sprang up as an offshoot of our society's preservation efforts.

ATRRRA aims to put together a professional design and financing package for restoring, renovating and reopening the Admiral. ATRRA would present the package to Cineplex Odeon and negotiate a purchase of the 47-year-old moviehouse, which has been designated a city landmark and nominated for the National Register of Historic Places through the work of our society's Save the Admiral Theater Task Force.

The initial ATRRA proposal calls for conversion of the Admiral to an arts center that would not only show films but also offer live dramatic productions in a dinner theatre format. All exterior and interior historical features of the Admiral would remain intact. An addition to the building (on the former Shell station site to the south) would house a parking garage and a row of retail shops.

The anticipated initial investment would reach at least \$3 million, says Freddy Gillogly, night manager at Angelina's Trattoria restaurant, just north of the Admiral. Gillogly, who heads ATRRA, has effectively promoted the Admiral preservation cause since Cineplex closed the theater last Jan. 29.

Gillogly has gathered a core of professionals with banking, accounting, project management, grant writing and architectural expertise (including Richard McCann, the successor architect to B. Marcus Priteca, the Admiral's original designer) to serve on ATRRA's board. ATRRA soon will file its application for non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service.

On Dec. 5, ATRRA completed a different application, to the National Endowment for the Arts, for a \$148,400 grant for design and technical services leading to a financing package that ATRRA would negotiate with Cineplex. Our society's Executive Committee sent the application in our society's name because at that time ATRRA had not secured IRS non-profit status. ATRRA plans to compete for other regional and national grants as well.

Our society's Executive Committee, at its Dec. 14 meeting, approved sending a letter to Cineplex introducing ATRRA's efforts. ATRRA's proposal also has won the initial approval of the West Seattle Cultural Society and West Seattle Totem Theatre.

Meanwhile, the city continues its negotiations with Cineplex in the Controls and Incentives part of the city landmark process. Cineplex wants the city Landmarks Preservation Board to relax the landmark designation to the extent that a buyer of the Admiral could remodel it into a retail center. That could mean altering some historic features of the Admiral, including the interior murals. City staff will report to the board on those negotiations at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 17, in the Arctic Building, 700 Third Ave. Our task force will attend and possibly speak at that meeting.

Ownership of the Admiral may change soon. National news reports indicate that Cineplex's chairman, Garth Drabinsky, was forced to resign Dec. 1. The same reports stated that the company hopes to sell its New York and Seattle moviehouses and that rumors were circulating that the Toronto chain's Seattle theaters may be sold to General Cinema Corp. or ACT III Theaters, both of which already operate moviehouses in Seattle.

In another wrinkle, state Sen. Phil Talmadge, a member of our society who has provided legal representation in our dealings with Cineplex, will introduce a bill during the 1990 Legislature to provide grant support for efforts such as ATRRA's. We appreciate Phil's commitment to the cause. (When he campaigned for his Senate seat in 1978, Phil bemoaned the 1977 razing of the Granada Theater south of the Junction and vowed to do his best to prevent such an occurrence again. He remains true to his word.)

Finally (and regrettably), the Admiral became the victim of vandalism Dec. 17. Vandals broke in through a front door, slashed a movie screen, damaged an antique clock and burned paper and a broom, creating a total of \$4,000 damage, according to the West Seattle Herald. It was the second such incident since the theater closed. Vandals broke four front windows last July.

SHORTS (continued): archivist. His contributions will be missed.

The appointment of a new archivist will be taken up by a Collections Committee headed by **Flo Lentz** and including **Lein-Hayes** and **Ashford**.

Ashford's last treasurer's report is a happy one, reflecting a Centennial year bursting with activities. The net total for revenue (\$6,669.54) over expenses (\$4,492.18) for the year from October 1988 to October 1989 was \$2,177.36. With a carryover of \$2,128.50, the checkbook balance as of October 1989 was \$4,305.86.

The membership report is similarly rosy, says Secretary **Elliott Couden**. As of Jan. 1, 1990, the roster shows 207 members, all but 25 of whom are listed as active.

At the Oct. 7 meeting, **Morrison Campbell**, a retired Kenny Home resident who amassed a long career as a Junction businessman, was present to be enshrined as an honorary member of the society.

Longtime Fauntleroy residents **Roy Morse** and **E. Richard Brown** recently published *Fauntleroy Legacy*, a slick, medium-format, 168-page softcover history of the Fauntleroy neighborhood. The book contains 50 black and white photos and 36 family history profiles. Cost is \$15. Nearly 600 of the first printing of 1,200 copies have been sold, reports Morse, a member of our society. They're available at Fauntleroy YMCA (937-1000), Fauntleroy Church, the Original Bakery, the Wayside card and gift shop and Dunville Gallery. Profits (once about 650 are sold) will go to Fauntleroy Church, the Fauntleroy Community Service Agency and Camp Colman. Well-done, Roy and Rick!

FOOTPRINTS

(Editor: Clay Eals)

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