

Footprints

on the sands of time....

ISSUE XVII

SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER 1991

HERE COMES NOVEMBER -- A MONTH FOR ACTION!

Looking for something to do? Wondering what your historical society has been up to? Want to see a few old friends and meet some new ones?

Look no further. November is just around the corner, and our society is planning a full slate of activities that promise to reawaken or enhance your interest in our heritage. Please mark all three on your calendars. Everyone is welcome!

At Home in Washington -- Saturday, Nov. 9

The first of these events is our Annual Membership Meeting, which will feature a professional slide presentation called *At Home in Washington* by Leonard Garfield, the state's architectural historian.

Garfield, based in Olympia, centers his presentation on the history of residential architecture throughout Washington. His show has been quite well received by other historical groups and is not to be missed!

The annual meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov. 9, in the South Seattle Community College Little Theater, 6000 16th Ave. S.W. Officers will be elected, and a video compilation of highlights from the past year's society-related events will be shown. Refreshments will be served.

Mount View Looks Back -- Wednesday, Nov. 13



Mt. View school, 1910

Just four days later, our society is co-sponsoring *Mount View Looks Back*, a fun session of songs and reminiscences for young and old, revolving around Mount View Elementary School in White Center.

The program will run from 1:30 to about 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 13, in the gym of Mount View Elementary School, 10811 12th Ave. S.W.

Sponsored by the Highline School District, the event not only celebrates Mount View's history, but it also promotes a commemoration of the district's 50th anniversary slated for Nov. 22-24 at the Highline High School auditorium.

Performing at the event will be the Hi-Liners vocal group. Current Mount View students will ask prepared questions of oldtimers, and the whole session will be videotaped. The White Center Chamber of Commerce and the Mount View PTSA also are co-sponsors. Refreshments will be served.

The Care and Feeding of Volunteers -- Tuesday, Nov. 26

During Thanksgiving week, our society will host the monthly meeting of the Association of King County Historical Organizations (AKCHO), which features *The Care and Feeding of Volunteers*, a presentation by Bob Sumbardo, a member of our Executive Board.

Emphasizing a team approach, Sumbardo's talk focuses on how to find, keep and appreciate volunteers, whom he says are the lifeblood of any organization.

The AKCHO meeting will run from 9 a.m. to noon in room RS (Robert Smith) 79 at South Seattle Community College, 6000 16th Ave. S.W.

On display at the meeting will be historical displays from our society's collection and from the historic Sumbardo Mansion at 1715 Sunset Ave. S.W. Refreshments will be served.



Bob
Sumbardo

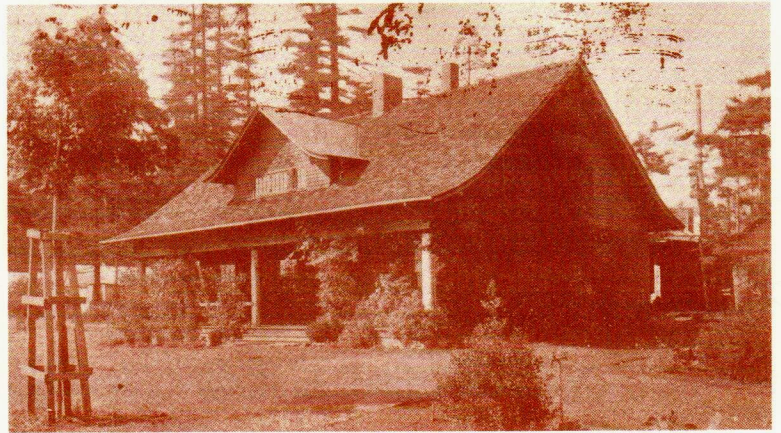


IN THIS 1914 photo, the ferry West Seattle is berthed to the south (right) of the Grand Trunk Pacific railroad dock, which was being rebuilt after a huge waterfront fire earlier that year.

OUR COLLECTION KEEPS EXPANDING

Several photos were donated to our burgeoning collection recently by Seattle native **John McDowell**, of Edmonds, including the photos on this page.

If you have or know of photographs or other artifacts relating to the history of West Seattle and White Center, please consider our society a worthy recipient. As plans for a museum at South Seattle Community College take shape, we intend to set up professional storage and display of our collection for the benefit of generations to come!



ROSE LODGE on present-day Wilton Court Southwest at Alki Point is shown on this 1910 postcard.



THE LIVING ROOM of Rose Lodge, B.W. Baker, Proprietor, is shown in this 1910 postcard view.

CINEPLEX, BUYER MOVE TOWARD ADMIRAL SALE

It looks like the historic Admiral Theater, closed since January 1989, is sailing toward a new owner.

Cineplex Odeon, which has owned the theater since December 1986, and **Mark Gartin**, of West Seattle's C & R Electric, entered into an earnest money agreement in mid-October.

Newspaper reports indicate that Gartin has made the first of several payments leading to closure of the sale on Dec. 31. Purchase price is about \$1.2 million.

The transaction encompasses the theater itself, the former gas-station lot on the corner of Southwest Admiral Way and California Avenue Southwest, and a parking lot and condemned house along 42nd Avenue Southwest adjacent to Gartin's electric business.

Our society's Save the Admiral Theater Task Force steering committee hopes to meet with Gartin soon.

Gartin has said he wishes to preserve the Admiral, which was designated a city landmark in June 1989. The city's Landmarks Preservation Board will discuss a proposed Controls and Incentives Agreement for the theater at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, in the Arctic Building, 700 Third Ave. downtown.

Board sets video camera policy

Our Executive Board recently approved a policy regarding members' personal use of the video camera and tripod that our society purchased a year ago.

Members can use the camera and tripod for personal purposes, according to the policy, which sets a per-day fee and requires the signing of an equipment loan agreement. If you want more information on the video camera policy, contact **Clay Eals**, custodian of the equipment, at 935-7515.

Mr. West Seattle dies at 93

Norman Alwyn (Normie) Beers, an honorary member of our society who became known as Mr. West Seattle for his decades of involvement with the West Seattle YMCA and Chamber of Commerce, died Aug. 21, 1991, at the age of 93.

Lengthy articles in the Aug. 28 West Seattle Herald and Aug. 27 Seattle Times detailed Normie's life, which also was celebrated at a memorial service on Aug. 28 at Fautleroy Church. Officiating was the **Rev. Paul Pruitt**. A large audience of "Normie's kids" attended.

Normie was the inspiration for the West Side Story history book published in 1987. At the reception following Normie's memorial service, our society made available for viewing a written transcript of a lengthy 1986 interview of Normie by society member **Brad Chrisman** and a 10-minute video clip of

Normie speaking at the 1987 West Side Story publication party.

Those who wish may make contributions in Normie's memory to the South Seattle Community College Foundation Scholarship Fund.

Contributions flow to projects

Our society's Executive Board has made financial contributions to several projects in recent months.

The board contributed \$500 to the Murals of West Seattle, to help the project match a \$30,000 city Neighborhood Matching Fund grant.

Other projects receiving donations of society funds were the South Seattle Community College Endowment Fund, \$250; the society-sponsored **Earl Robinson** video documentary, \$125 (for printing expenses for the program for an Aug. 18 memorial celebration); \$100 to the Mount View Looks Back celebration (see page 1); and \$65 for a brick in the Weather Watch Park project.

The board also altered the selling price of our society's two fundraising pins.

Owing to their short supply, Alki Lighthouse pins now cost \$3 apiece instead of \$2. Because of their lesser popularity, Washington Centennial pins now cost \$1 apiece instead of \$2.

Pick up a pin by attending one of our society's November events (see page 1).

Can you help on the 1992 home tour?

A large list of potential sites for our 1992 Tour of Homes has been assembled, and preparations must begin soon.

The tour, which enters its fourth year in 1992, takes place on the Saturday before Mother's Day.

We need society members to lead committees on this important annual event. If you are interested, please express that interest at our Annual Membership Meeting on Nov. 9 or call 935-7515. We need you!

New/old Gatewood school celebrates

Gatewood Elementary School, with a spanking new addition and a splendidly refurbished and restored older section, held its formal dedication ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 17.

A capacity crowd gathered in the auditorium of the 81-year-old school to hear current and former Gatewood students, including society Treasurer **Joan Mraz**, speak about what the school has meant to them.

The assembly, videotaped by our society, paid tribute to society members **David and Karen Wissing**, who almost singlehandedly obtained city landmark status for the building, preventing its razing by the Seattle School District.

Congratulations, Gatewood!

MEMORIES OF SOUTH ALKI -- THE WOODS

(Editor's Note: David N. "Bob" Lillevand moved with his family from Queen Anne Hill to South Alki in 1903 when he was 1 year old. This essay is an excerpt from his memoirs, donated to our society before his death on Sept. 17, 1987.)

By BOB LILLEVAND

Before 1907, when West Seattle became a part of the city of Seattle, the area south of Alaska Street, both east and west of California Avenue, was literally a forest, except for the Spring Hill area and a few farms serviced by Jacobsen Road leading from Alki Avenue (now called Beach Drive) to 12th Avenue (Dawson Street) and California.

A history of the Seattle railway system described the 1907 Fauntleroy Park line as "traversing country that was almost a primeval wilderness south of Youngstown.... Fauntleroy Park Line was extended during 1907 through almost uninhabited country to terminus at 45th Avenue Southwest and Roxbury Street, a tiny station known as Endolyne, and a loop through the tall timber."

The forest included all the typical Northwest growth, including first-growth Douglas Fir, hemlock, cedar, spruce, maple, alder, etc., with splashes of beautiful dogwood. In addition, there was abundant growth of ferns, salal, Oregon grape, as well as flowers and berry bushes previously mentioned.

Starting at Jacobsen Road back of the Svendsen property, there was a narrow, winding trail leading to the Junction, 9th (Alaska Street) and California. When raining or snowing, it was prudent to use a tree branch to be worked ahead to shake off moisture and straighten up the overhanging growth. I always enjoyed the trail route to the Junction and other countless hours of hiking and exploration.

I had even more respect and admiration for the tall

Douglas Firs when I learned that they were there, looking down on the HMS Discovery in 1792, when anchored off Restoration Point on Bainbridge Island, this point sheltering Port Blakely from the more severe southwest storms. Capt. Vancouver dispatched Peter Puget through the channel on the west side of Vashon Island, where he discovered a bay, a half century later to be named Commencement Bay, Tacoma's harbor.

These first-growth trees also witnessed Chief Seattle and members of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes welcome the Denny-Terry group land on the north side of Alki Point in 1851, the beginning of an era that would lead to the destruction of all first-growth timber, except in Schmitz Park, in Alki and West Seattle in less than a century.

Forest fires, one particularly devastating, in the Fauntleroy area destroyed many of the old trees and growth, and the development of homes made necessary their continuing elimination.

The last giant fir tree in the area above Jacobsen Road was east of the Svendsen property. Trees, like people, do not seem to get along very well without companions, so when it obviously was becoming tired it was necessary to remove it while there still was open space into which it could fall without property damage.

At that time, there was only one resident in the area of the tree. Because of the potential risks, experienced loggers were employed. With all the advance planning and precautions, notwithstanding, the tree landed directly on top of the small home, completely demolishing it!

Call it justice, retribution or whatever. It just seemed proper that the last of the giant Douglas Firs, following the victims of fires and so-called progress, should go down fighting, a last futile gesture of defiance.

As related to our fishing, they also took with them our only means of locating the great sole fishing area, which we had always located using certain tall fir trees.

We always referred to the hillside forest as The Woods.

FOOTPRINTS

(Editor: Clay Eals)

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