

10th Anniversary Year!

Footprints

on the sands of time....

ISSUE XXVII

SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 1994

Get a first peek inside our society's Log Cabin Museum on Nov. 12

Director Emeritus of MOHAI
James Warren tops program
for meeting at Alki Homestead

Our society's 1994 annual meeting -- set for 10 a.m to noon on Saturday, Nov. 12 -- promises several new and unique features to draw anyone interested in the heritage of Southwest Seattle.

If you've never come to a meeting of our society, this is the one to attend. Here's why:

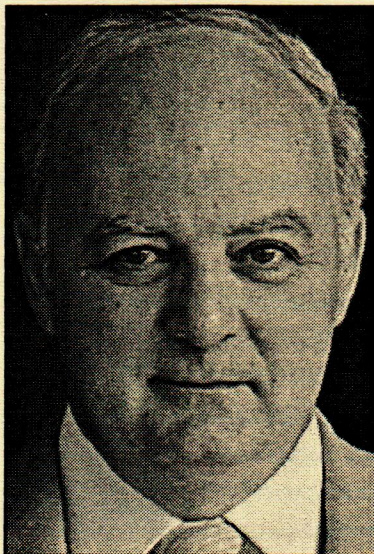
■ Everyone attending will get the first public look at the interior of the Birthplace of Seattle Log House Museum that our society is in the midst of acquiring.

■ The speaker will be one of the Pacific Northwest's foremost educators, historians and authors -- **DR. JAMES R. WARREN**, director emeritus of Seattle's Museum of History and Industry and historical columnist for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

■ For the first time, our annual meeting will be held in the Alki Homestead restaurant at 2717 61st Ave. S.W., just a half block north of the Log House Museum.

Parking will be plentiful at the Homestead, which also is served by Metro routes 56 and 37 stopping nearby.

The meeting will begin with the election of 1995 officers and filling positions on the Board of Trustees. The 1994 officers -- **MERRILLEE HAGEN**, president; **ARLENE**



Dr. James Warren, director emeritus of the Museum of History and Industry

WADE, vice president; **JOAN MRAZ**, treasurer; **BRAD CHRISMAN**, general secretary; and **CAROL VINCENT**, membership secretary -- have agreed to serve another year.

Warren then will speak on the benefits --

both for individuals and the community -- of establishing the Log House Museum.

The former administrative vice president at Seattle Community College and ex-president of Edmonds Community College has written many books on Pacific Northwest history, among them Where Mountains Meet the Sea -- An Illustrated History of Puget Sound and King County and Its Queen City: Seattle.

Following Warren's presentation, those attending will divide into small groups to discuss museum-related tasks. Then the doors to the museum will open for our membership's first tour!

The nominees for two Board of Trustees positions that will expire at the end of 1997 are:

■ **Michael Prihoda**, who heads the South Seattle Community College Floristry Department.

■ **Gloria Dresie**, agent for Prudential Benton's Realty, former owner of Elliott Bay Realty and former chair of the SSCC Foundation Board.

If elected on Nov. 12, they will fill board positions being vacated by Carol Munoz and Marietta Pane.



The Alki Homestead in 1905, one year after it was built. Photos courtesy Doris Nelson

Alki Homestead is her 'baby'

Doris Nelson,
proprietor
since 1960,
welcomes
historical
society
to 1904-era
restaurant

'It was all word-of-mouth. People said they heard Doris was running the Homestead again. The first night I came back, I was jammed.'

-- DORIS NELSON

DORIS NELSON never set out to become a restaurant owner.

"It just happened," says the proprietor of Alki's popular Homestead restaurant. "I sort of fell into it."

Thirty-four years after taking the reins in 1960, she's still in charge, but the success of the Homestead is no accident. The restaurant's old-fashioned charm has been carefully cultivated by Nelson, who has taken care to preserve not only the historic log structure that the restaurant occupies, but the "grace and charm" of days gone by, as well.

Decorated with antique furnishings and collections of fine silver, the restaurant has an ambiance that is refined but unpretentious. The intended effect, she says, is "like turning back the clock, to a time of more gracious dining and living."

The building itself has a story to tell. Built in 1904 by Seattle soap manufacturer WILLIAM J. BERNARD, it was designed in the classic log house style popular at the turn of the century. Nearby, Bernard built a smaller log building to serve as a carriage house and maid's quarters. In 1907, Seattle's Horseless Carriage Club bought the buildings to lodge members willing to brave what was then an all-day trip from Seattle.

After incarnations as a boarding house and

family home, the main house got a new lease on life in 1950, when SWEND NEILSEN bought the place to start a restaurant, which he called the Homestead. A few years later, Neilsen sold the restaurant to ADELE FOOTE, who in turn sold it to Nelson in 1960.

Nelson, who had been working as a bookkeeper for Foote, wasn't especially keen on the restaurant business at first.

"But once you get involved, it grows on you," she says. "It's addictive."

Nelson tried to break the habit in 1978, selling the Homestead to new owners. But a few months later, the restaurant had gone out of business, and Nelson came back to pick up the pieces.

"They took everything. There was nothing left when I came back," she recalls. "Not a spoon. Not a cup of flour."

Still, Nelson persevered, and soon the Homestead was packing 'em in.

"That's the most rewarding thing that's happened to me in my whole long-livin' life," Nelson says. "It was all word-of-mouth. People said they heard Doris was

running the Homestead again. The first night I came back, I was jammed."

Today, the Homestead is one of only three remaining log structures on Alki.

Another is the former carriage house, the building our society is

developing into a museum.

Ironically, Nelson says she has never set foot in the smaller house. But she is definitely supportive of the society's museum plans. Recently, she signed an agreement that will allow museum visitors to use the Homestead's 24-space parking lot during the restaurant's off hours. Also, on Nov. 12, the Homestead will be the site of the historical society's annual meeting.

Nelson is looking forward to the opportunity to show the old place off.

"I love it. It's my baby," she says, taking a cue from Ol' Blue Eyes. "And I did it my way."



(From left) Doris Nelson and former Homestead proprietors Adele Foote and Mrs. Swend Neilsen.

Society builds foundation for museum acquisition

When the Birthplace of Seattle Log House Museum project emerged in April as a \$200,000 winner on the Alki Community Improvement Fund ballot, the victory celebration was sweet, but short.

"We didn't have time to celebrate – not a heartbeat," says **ARLENE WADE**, who along with fellow historical society board members **MERRILEE HAGEN** and **CAROL VINCENT** had spearheaded the effort to get the project on the ballot and drum up community support.

The day after the April 6 announcement, the tireless trio went back to work with other society volunteers, busily checking off items on a museum "to do" list that seemed to grow longer by the day.

Following are highlights of accomplishments to date:

■ Our society's annual home tour May 7, which drew 600 people, featured an exterior-only look at the Log House, with volunteers providing background to tour-goers.

■ The biggest challenge surfaced in July, when the city informed our society that the Log House's property appraisal – which was tied to comparisons of other single-family homes in the area and ignored the building's historical value – came in at \$170,000, which was \$20,000 short of the \$190,000 selling price already agreed upon with owner (and member) **LARRY STINER**.

In August, the city confirmed that it could provide up to \$30,000 for certain required improvements to the building, but only \$170,000 toward the purchase.

Faced with the \$20,000 shortfall, our board mounted an emergency fund-raising effort. Within two weeks, volunteers had secured the entire amount, including a

\$15,000 emergency grant from King County's cultural facility fund, and, thanks to some fast fund-raising by society founder **ELLIOTT COUDEN**, more than \$5,000 in contributions from community groups, individuals and society members.

■ During the fund-raising effort, the society's application for \$50,000 in Department of Neighborhoods (DON) matching funds was forced to take a back seat.

But with just two weeks to go before the Sept. 12 application deadline, society volunteers succeeded in completing a detailed budget and timeline for the

museum's architectural and exhibit design phase, and received signed pledges for more than 3,500 hours of volunteer time. The DON was expected to name winning proposals early this month.

■ Over the summer, our society strengthened partnerships with community and heritage organizations, joining the Southwest District Council, meeting with Alki Elementary teachers and Museum of History and Industry staff to develop an education program, and making presentations to several community groups, including Greater Harbor 2000 and the White Center and West Seattle chambers.

Society members also brought home volumes of information from the American Museum Association and Washington Museum Association annual conferences, and the society joined both organizations.

■ In September, the society received a \$3,800 award from King County's special projects fund. The money will be used to



*Birthplace of Seattle
Log House Museum*

SPECIAL ALERT:

Your help is needed NOW!

Please call or jot a note to Jan Drago, chair of the Seattle City Council's Labor and Finance Committee, which is handling the final matters regarding our Log House Museum. Ask for quick action to approve our society's covenant agreement and museum acquisition.

Jan Drago's phone number is 684-8801. Calls to committee vice president Sue Donaldson (684-8806), and members Martha Choe (684-8802), Tom Weeks (684-8805) and Margaret Pageler (684-8807) would help, too.

The address for council members is 1100 Municipal Building, 600 Fourth Ave., Seattle, 98014. Their fax is 684-8587.

Please support our society and take a moment to help!

Please turn to page 8

Sandpit, family made Depression days joyful

This is the third in a series of reminiscences by longtime Fauntleroy resident Sam Jones.

The Depression summers were pure joy. We spent most waking hours at the Sandpit, now the posh area known as Arroyo Beach.

In the early 1930s it was a sandpit operated by Pioneer Sand and Gravel Co. The loading docks were our diving platforms and the beach was pure sand, extending about a mile north

of Seola Beach.

Fishing was great for sole and flounder in the deep drop-offs and the water, as I recall, always seemed swimmingly warm,

although that may have been the indifference of youth.

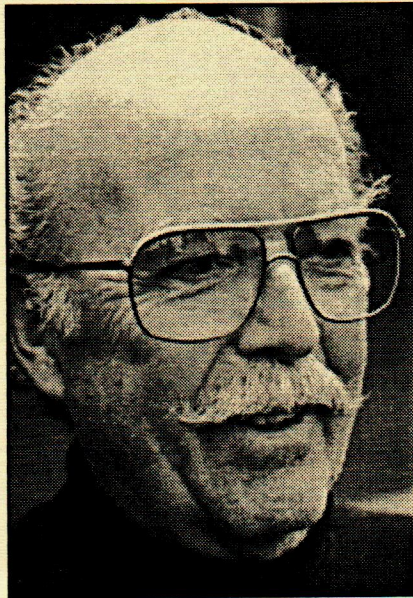
Pioneer's activities had been cut back by 1931, so we generally had free run of the beach. The grumpy caretaker Matheny did fire his old horse pistol over our head one day, but it did not prevent our returning later.

One summer a regular at the beach was an old boy who had a stump farm and chicken ranch in the White Center area. He was complaining about the problems of land clearing, and since we had earlier discovered the location of Pioneer's blasting supplies, we accommodated our chicken-rancher friend by each daily carrying home a stick of dynamite, which we delivered to him until he had enough to take care of his landscaping. I am sure our parents would have disapproved had they known.

We had a head start on the Depression. Uncle Will had been wiped out financially

'I carried water from Uncle Will's house for the entire two years. We employed kerosene lamps at night and we heated water for baths in a tub on the kitchen stove. Firewood was too expensive, and I scrounged for anything that would burn.'

'I couldn't count the auto tires I have cut up and used for a fire starter. It really was a torch, and I wouldn't recommend it today. The woods in our neighborhood provided some down trees that burned well.'



by the Crash of '29, and Uncle Brownie had lost his job at Steam Supply and Rubber Co.

Mother had opened piano studios with another teacher, Kenneth Lyman, in the Fischer Studio Building in downtown Seattle in 1928. Her class was limited, as she was training with Lyman at the time. The country was on a roll and no one was aware of the impending doom. When it hit, piano students disappeared and Mother's class shrank to about a \$5-per-week income level.

I was of junior high age, and there was little I could contribute. Paper routes were hard to find, people maintained their own yards, stores reduced their forces, and work for a

small eighth-grader was a scarce item.

I recall working for one woman on Saturdays for my

lunch and a dime, weeding and cutting her lawn. I

picked cherries in season in the neighborhood for a penny a pound. One summer I picked wild blackberries that I sold for \$1 a gallon.

In the meantime, the economics of our household rapidly assumed disaster proportions. Food was a priority, so our limited income did not provide for utility payments. As a result, water, electricity and telephone were soon eliminated from our household.

The years of 1932 and 1933 were the darkest, and not just because we were without lights. I carried water from Uncle Will's house for the entire two years. We employed kerosene lamps at night and we heated water for baths in a tub on the kitchen stove. Firewood was too expensive, and I scrounged for anything that would burn. I couldn't count the auto tires I have cut up and used for a fire starter. It really was a torch, and I wouldn't recommend it today. The woods in our neighborhood provided some down trees that burned well.

Memories
by
Sam Jones

Grandma Graham always had a few bantam hens providing fresh eggs and occasionally an old stewer for Sunday dinner. Those bantys were a sneaky lot, always hiding nests in the brush near the house. So it was a continual hunt to find fresh eggs before those little mothers collected enough to start a family.

We had a Plymouth Rock rooster, whose origin I cannot recall, that grew from a pleasant little tyke to a great gray monster with spurs almost two inches long. This guy not only herded the bantam population around but took it upon himself to police the entire yard, attempting to drive off anyone who approached the house.

This attitude resulted in his detention in a makeshift chicken coop I was forced to construct, much to his dissatisfaction. It was more than your life was worth to enter that coop. Conrad (his given name) didn't last too long, as Grandma decided to introduce him to the stew pot before he became too tough for Sunday dinner.

About the same time I raised a pair of Mallard ducks from eggs. They grew to a robust size with beautiful greenhead plumage, landlocked as a result of occasional wing clipping. Their inability to fly was their undoing, as one day they were dispatched in quick order by my aunt's dog Babe. Even though they had attained pet status, I was not about to lose everything, so we salvaged the edible parts for dinner and buried the plumage in our pet cemetery.

Those ducks had the last word, since I was the one in the family who was apparently the least guilt ridden and willing to feast on them, and their meat being a good bit richer than banty chicken, I thought I had been poisoned. To be honest, I think my conscience soured my stomach.

Milk was eight cents a quart unless you wanted richer cream for another penny. Bread was a nickel a loaf and round steak, if you could afford it, was 25 cents a pound. We never bought more than a print (quarter pound) of butter or 10 cents worth of sugar at one time. We consumed a lot of oatmeal but rarely had a packaged dry cereal.

In the depth of the Depression, neighbor-

hood commissaries were established, similar to the food banks of today. They were operated by the Welfare Department and required registration and proof of need. It wasn't difficult to prove need at that time, although I cannot recall any of my friends' families registering.

As a result, I was too proud to be seen near the place, but I would wait around back of the building until Grandma came out with two big shopping bags and help her tote them home, knowing there would be a couple of rough cut slabs of steak in the bundle. There was no false pride in Grandma Graham's makeup, for which I was ever thankful.

Uncle Brownie became a volunteer at the Commissary, making him eligible for first pick of available meat and produce. His job was to herd an old, borrowed truck to Eastern Washington, load whatever surplus fruits or produce were made available by farmers and orchardists in the area, and then try to get back to Seattle with a minimum of mishaps. Often motor trouble and flat tires extended beyond the life of overripe fruit, and many trips were a bust, but other times he was lucky and came home with the bounty of the fields.

Suitable clothing became a concern through senior high school. I remember a great pair of leather-heeled wing-tip oxfords that were given to me. The fact they were two sizes too large was unimportant in view of their beauty, and a toe stuffing of newspaper made them wearable in my eyes.

My seventh-grade corduroys were washed with a red sweatshirt, and I was forced to wear pink pants to school for the remainder of the quarter. When dirty cords were in style, my clothing shortage worked in my favor, as I could wear my one pair of pants forever or until my mother would find them standing in a corner on a Saturday and wash them, much to my dismay.

As a sophomore in high school, I was given a pair of ankle high shoes, an old man's shoe, and I would always change into my gym shoes with my feet in my locker, thinking, of course, that no one would notice my funny shoes. Oh, such false pride.

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'I was too proud to be seen near the place, but I would wait around back of the building until Grandma came out with two big shopping bags and help her tote them home, knowing there would be a couple of rough cut slabs of steak in the bundle.

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'Home, Home, Home Southwest Seattle' song honors our founder, Elliott Couden

The following song was written in honor of Elliott Couden, our society's founder, as part of the celebration of our society's 10th anniversary year.

It was sung with gusto by the audience attending this year's annual membership picnic on Sunday, June 26, 1994, at historic Camp Long in West Seattle.

The song is sung to the tune of "Home, Home, Home in West Seattle," a turn-of-the-century promotional song that appeared in endpapers of the hardcover editions of the West Side Story history book. That song was based on the tune of "Tromp, Tromp, Tromp," a war tune popular at the time.

Perhaps its chorus will become a traditional refrain at membership gatherings of the society!



Elliott Couden, society founder, who turned 83 on Oct. 20.

*'How can we get
in a rut*

*'When the name
is Elliott*

*'For our founder
and the blue
adjoining bay?'*

Chorus

Home, Home, Home Southwest Seattle.
Here good people come to stay.
How can we get in a rut
When the name is Elliott
For our founder and the blue adjoining bay?

Verse 1

Our founder started getting sore
Back in 1984.
Way too many people throwing out their stuff.
To the task his heart he gave,
All the history to save:
Photos, documents and old official guff!

Verse 2

Hustling women and men
From Alki to Burien
With a handshake, smile and application fee,
Never running out of steam
He would tell them of his dream
For boldly building this society!

Verse 3

Then we jumped into a book
And before we all could look
Washington's Centennial was within reach.
So we launched a ferry cruise
And made some rainy, briny news
With a modern Denny landing on the beach!

Verse 4

We started up a yearly tour,
Older homes a potent lure,
And despite the work, we didn't carp or grouse.
Then a closure was no joke.
The community awoke
When we felt we had to save the moviehouse!

Verse 5

More projects began to sing:
Weather Watch and Warren Wing.
World-class artists came and made us mural row.
Then a woman took a stand,
Documentary her plan.
Saved a musical legend on video!

Verse 6

The Library talks were good,
Saluted Mount View and Gatewood,
Heard from Payton, Dorpat, Wilbee, Garfield, Beers.
Now a cabin sets our pace,
And it fits with college space,
So we'll have a home to last us through the years!

Verse 7

Looking back on the decade,
You might think we had it made,
With a peninsula whose past inspires us all.
But without the initial dream,
We just wouldn't be a team.
So let's hear it for the one who stands most tall!

Editor's note: Society founder Elliott Couden read this eloquent essay at a meeting of persons interested in the formation of an historical society, at South Seattle Community College, on May 24, 1984. He re-read it at our membership picnic on June 26 of this year.

As an active and involved participant in many organized activities, I do not see this gathering as "just another meeting." In fact, to me it is the beginning of the fulfillment of a long-term dream — one that began many years ago, one that has been waiting for the "moment of truth."

That "truth" is a growing awareness that the forces of change in the society we have grown up in are ever-accelerating, with no let-up, no time to become familiar and comfortable with any given period in our time, and hardly time to look forward to new problems and new opportunities ahead, much less time to look back at a world we thought we once knew, but which we shall never see again.

The future holds no terror for me, for I am persuaded that reason will prevail over the threat of annihilation. Rather, at the rate of societal change I have experienced, there is a fair chance that even I may see changes and improvements for mankind that in the past might have required generations in terms of time. I do take a little time, now and then, to think about the changes I'd like to see take place, no matter how long it might take in achievement. And I spend even a little more time evaluating and savoring the great people I have known and the great times I have experienced in days gone by.

Some say that one should not spend time dwelling upon the past. "Think only of what lies ahead," they say.

Personally, I find it a bit difficult to do much planning for the future unless I can understand where I'm coming from! The past does contain much of worth for all of us. It is our heritage, and it is our culture — good, bad or indifferent. It is those in the

past who cared enough to provide me with conveniences and needs of educational facilities and tools; water, sewer and street improvements; and a system of laws designed to provide equal access and opportunity, with security for me and my family, and my neighbor and his family.

But names and faces and structures and organizations begin to fade with the passage of time. Are all these not worthy of remembering and appreciating and passing on to later generations?

All over this nation — yes, all over King County — there is a proliferation of historical societies and museums, coming into being as our historical consciousness has intensified.

Our local research has produced the astounding fact

that the area most dear to us, associated with the earliest history of Seattle, from Alki Point, the Duwamish Waterway and Pigeon Point all the way to Burien, has no known official organization dedicated to the preservation of historic information, artifacts and museum pieces relating specifically to this territory.

By default, much of what could be preserved is lost or becoming dissipated or moving to facilities outside of our neighborhoods.

I do firmly believe that there are enough people in this Southwest Seattle area who care enough to meet our opportunity to form, undergird and develop a viable, exciting format whereby we and others may preserve our heritage for the education and benefit of future generations. We can do for others what others have done for us.

The educational aspects are what appeal to me the most. The field is wide open. We have already received assurances of resource support, we have governmental support, we have the freedom to fashion this in any direction or format we wish.

I want to find out if others share my dream. I solicit your responses.

My Dream *by Elliott Couden*

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'We can do for others what others have done for us.'

*-- ELLIOTT COUDEN,
society founder*

Log house acquisition requires many steps

Continued from page 3

The covenant agreement requires our society to offer free admission to the museum, serve a minimum of 4,000 visitors per year, provide off-street parking, maintain regular hours on Saturdays and Sundays plus a minimum of five additional hours per week, and be ready to open by Nov. 13, 1995.

produce a 12- to 20-minute video – co-produced by society members **PAUL DORPAT** and **B.J. BULLERT** – telling the story of Alki's pioneer families.

■ In October, the museum reached an important milestone when Homestead restaurant owner (and society member) **DORIS NELSON** signed an easement allowing Log House Museum visitors to use her 24-space parking lot during hours when the restaurant is not open.

■ Also in October, the society and the city finalized details of the deed and covenant, the agreement by which the city will allow the society to own and operate the museum. The society owes a debt of thanks to attorney **JORDAN HECKER**, who has volunteered his time to work on the covenant and other legal issues.

According to the document, our society will remodel the building to meet security and fire codes and make the building accessible to disabled persons. Our society must reroof the house with cedar shingles, replace the deck, repair logs on the south wall, apply for historical landmark status and pay all museum maintenance, insurance, utility and staffing costs.

The agreement also requires our society to offer free admission to the museum, serve a minimum of 4,000 visitors per year, provide off-street parking, maintain regular hours on Saturdays and Sundays plus a minimum of five additional hours per week, and be ready to open by Nov. 13, 1995.

Local history buffs will note that the opening date coincides with the 144th anniversary of the Denny Party's landing at Alki Point. Plans are already under way for a grand opening event, complete with tours of the museum and a gala celebration at the Homestead restaurant.

Markers get \$70,000

Our society's plan to create a series of interpretive markers along Alki has moved closer to reality.

As part of the Shoreline Parks Improvement Fund, the Seattle Art Commission has allocated \$70,000 to design and install the markers, which will identify important historic sites and provide the basis for a self-guided historic walking tour.

Funding for similar markers along Harbor Avenue has not yet been secured.

FOOTPRINTS

(Editors: Clay Eals, Brad Chrisman)
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c/o South Seattle Community College
6000 16th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98106

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