

# Footprints

*on the sands of time....*

ISSUE XXVIII

SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 1995

## Historical society purchases log cabin for new museum

Sale closure saves piece of turn-of-the-century West Seattle history; donations and volunteers sought to bring structure up to city code

*[Following is the complete text of a press release our society sent to local media on Jan. 23.]*

The word "proposed" has come off the name.

The Birthplace of Seattle Log Cabin Museum will be a reality, now that the Southwest Seattle Historical Society officially owns the turn-of-the-century structure at 3003 61st Ave. S.W.

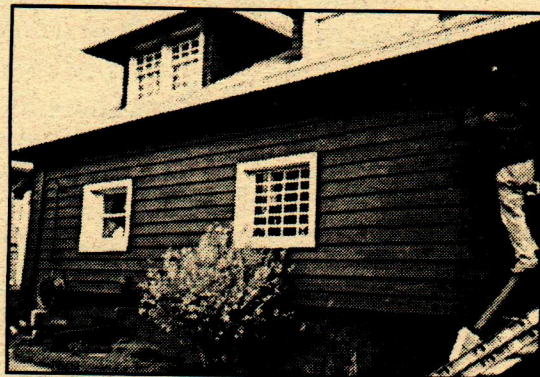
The sale of the cabin closed just days before the new year, insuring preservation of the two-floor building that not only will

house a community museum but also will stand as a charming reminder of life on Alki 90 years ago.

The lion's share of the \$190,000 purchase price came from a Metro mitigation grant approved last spring in a community vote. But the purchase would not have been possible without supplemental private and corporate donations and a grant from the King County landmarks and heritage hotel/motel tax program.

"This is perhaps the most important milestone in our organization's 10-year history," says MERRILEE HAGEN, president of the 300-member society which covers West Seattle and White Center.

"We have many people and organizations to thank," she says, "but



**BEFORE AND AFTER:** Volunteers from the West Seattle Kiwanis Club strip newer siding from the south wall of the cabin in January. See page 2 for faces and names.

Photos by Merrilee Hagen

### Home tour coming May 13; call to help!

Our society's sixth annual Tour of Homes will be held on Saturday, May 13, the day before Mother's Day.

Chairing the tour committee this year is new trustee MICHAEL PRIHODA, director of floristry at South Seattle Community College.

If you would like to help with the tour, call CAROL VINCENT, volunteer coordinator, at 937-6744.

**PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 4**



Here's the slate of 1995 officers and trustees approved at our November 1994 annual meeting:

**Merrilee Hagen**  
*President*

**Arlene Wade**  
*Vice President*

**Joan Mraz**  
*Treasurer*

**Carol Vincent**  
*Membership Secretary*

**Brad Chrisman**  
*General Secretary*

**Elliott Couden**  
*Trustee through 1995*

**Clay Eals**  
*Trustee through 1995*

**Arnie Vicklund**  
*Trustee through 1996*

**Karen Wissing**  
*Trustee through 1996*

**Carol Munoz**  
*Trustee through 1997*

**Michael Prihoda**  
*Trustee through 1997*



**MEMBERS OF the West Seattle Kiwanis Club who volunteered time to remove siding in January were (from left) Ed Ebert, George Reed, Phillip Brown, Charlie Runke, Dave Peterson, Gregory Norman, Warren Lawless and Gary Ross.**

*President's message:*

## Heartfelt thanks to all!

Through the hard work of many, the purchase of the log cabin closed in December. Our work is just beginning, but I want to thank some of those responsible for the successful closing of this sale.

Funds for the purchase were provided by Metro mitigation funds (\$170,000), a King County Landmarks and Heritage Commission grant (\$15,000) and contributions from our membership (\$5,000).

In addition, financial aid was generously given by **RICH BIANCHI** of ERA Bianchi-Zaar, Inc., Real Estate; **ROGER CAYCE** and **MIKE GAIN** of Cayce & Gain Inc., Realtors; and Jordan Hecker and Nancy Wickler of Hecker & Feilberg, PPS.

The Kiwanis recently gave us some great hands-on assistance to remove the siding on the south wall so the architects could assess the damage to the logs under neath. They had great fun doing it!

In our outreach contact with community groups, we have received overwhelming support

and enthusiasm for this project.

The Kiwanis, the Men's Christian Group, the Admiral Congregational Church women's group, the YMCA youth group, the Youth Conservation Corps, and representatives from Alki Elementary, Madison Middle and West Seattle High schools -- all ages and levels of our community -- want to be involved in the creation of the museum. This is gratifying to those of us who have worked so hard in the past year and a half to see this become a reality.

We will continue doing outreach programs throughout the year in an effort to involve the entire community. The museum will be a great asset to Southwest Seattle, and we would like to give everyone in the community the feeling that it belongs to them.

To all of you who made this purchase possible, our heartfelt thanks!

**-- Merrilee Hagen, 1995 president**



**CELEBRATING THE sale closure in January was the 1995 Executive Board: (seated, from left) Karen Wissing and Merrilee Hagen, (standing, from left) Carol Vincent, Clay Eals, Joan Mraz, Arlene Wade, Brad Chrisman, Carol Munoz, Elliott Couden, Arnie Vicklund and Michael Prihoda**



# When salmon spawned in Schmitz Park Creek

*[Ada Hallberg, a member of our society who lives near Beach Drive Southwest, has written many historical articles for Footprints.]*

**By ADA HALLBERG**

When I was a little girl, I went to Alki School, a red brick building trimmed with a belt of white ceramic tiles. The stairs in front of the school seemed very wide to me, and I often paused when I walked up them to catch a glimpse over my shoulder of bright, beautiful, blue Puget Sound.

The school was on a small rise of ground at the southwesterly edge of the Alki playfield, which the park department owned and staunchly "protected." The school grounds were covered with pea gravel. During the school hours, the children were not permitted to play on the park department's playfield.

A road ran between the playfield and the school grounds. It appeared to be an extension of Southwest Stevens Street, but we called it Schmitz Park Road. It began at 59th and Stevens and ran all of the way into the park, stopping short of a soft covering of tender grass that grew just before you entered the deeper part of the park.

Maple trees bordered both sides of the Schmitz Park road. You could kick three to four inches of leaves, and they would stick to your shoes and your clothes. Snowberries grew near the lower part of the road. Those little whiteballs were fun to pick and roll gently in your hand to feel them mush around and become less and less solid, their tough skin never breaking.

It was best not to stray off the road because there were nettles, salmon berries and, where it was boggy, dozens of skunk cabbages. In the thickest salmon berry clump, the boys had build a camp. They liked to call it a "wickiup" (a temporary lodge fashioned of saplings and brush, sometimes covered

with sod or bows). Adults could not crawl down the narrow passage or stand up in the wickiup.

Days before my memory, fish populated the stream that splashed from the top of Schmitz Park to Alki Beach. One man told me salmon used to return to that creek to spawn, and he saw them there. **RALPH FOSTER**, who lived near Alki Point, used to fish in Schmitz Park Creek during the early to mid-1920s with a piece of string and a bent pin.

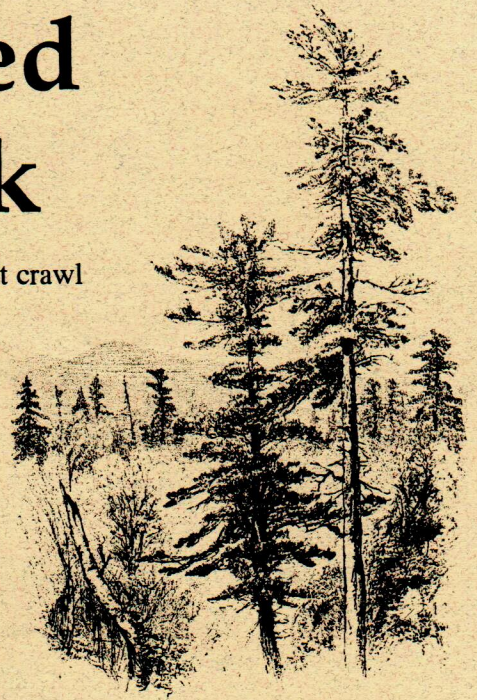
"We used to catch a bunch of little fish," he said, "big enough to eat."

**BIB LILLEVAND**, with his friend Ferdie Schmitz, was a fisherman all of his life. He told me he had fished at the Lincoln Beach Creek up past the old Kenney Home, winding through the woods to the creek and up through the brush to find the pool where the "keepers" were hiding. Later we discovered there were trout in the small creek running out of Schmitz Park.

"This was our 'private' fishing spot," he told me. "We would always release the trout hooked in the Schmitz Park Creek, and sometimes thought they should recognize me as an old friend."

The school and the park and the playfield were an integral part of our schooling in our early years at Alki school. The combination of these places on the land and in the woods beside the bay were vital to our lives.

The school sat there, imperiously maybe, but firmly grounded, facing the playfield and, beyond the field, the bay, backed by the woods along Admiral Way which soon blended into Schmitz Park. Most of us who went to Alki school were firmly grounded, too, and when we grew up and left Alki, we knew who we were, where we belonged and where we wanted to return.



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## Donations, help needed to further our museum

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

*'We're an energetic, committed group, and we welcome the help and support of those who wish to help bring this dream of a museum to reality.'*

*Arlene Wade,  
society vice  
president*

we're particularly grateful for the support that came from the Alki community, which will serve as the home base for a museum that will tell the unique story of the Duwamish peninsula."

Hagen emphasizes that acquisition of the log cabin is the first step down a long road to the museum's anticipated opening in November 1996.

And the next step — the raising of \$30,000 to bring the building up to city code — must be accomplished quickly, she says.

"Under a covenant with the city of Seattle, which is administering the grant from Metro, we must complete repairs the city is requiring by Sept. 1, including making the cabin accessible to the handicapped," Hagen says. "We also must move forward immediately with securing city landmark status for the building."

Anyone interested in getting involved in the preservation effort can send donations to the society in care of South Seattle Community College, 6000 16th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98106.

The society also needs volunteers interested in creating exhibits and programs, conducting research, helping with remodeling and serving as docents. They can contact CAROL VINCENT, membership secretary and volunteer coordinator, by calling (206) 937-6744.

The chance to make the Birthplace of Seattle Log Cabin Museum a reality is "an historic opportunity," says ARLENE WADE,

society vice-president, as the property is zoned for commercial development.

"At the turn of the century, Seattle voters had a chance to save the original Denny cabin from the wrecking ball," she says.

"They didn't, and now it is only a memory.

"Fortunately, the residents of Alki and our society, facing a similar challenge, chose to preserve this log structure as a museum. Without this effort, the building likely would have been razed in the name of progress."

Besides serving as an ideal location for telling the story of the birth of Seattle, Wade says the log cabin is itself historically significant.

"It was constructed in 1902 as the servants' quarters and carriage house for the Bernard family home, now the Alki Homestead restaurant," she says.

"It was designed in the nostalgic log house architectural style popular at the turn of the century, borne out by the decision in 1907 by Seattle's new auto club to buy the mansion and its adjoining carriage house to provide lodging for members on their outings to Alki Beach."

Alki, the birthplace of Seattle, is a state-designated landmark with a unique Native American and pioneer heritage.

Yet, with the exception of a modest plaque and a stone monument near the site of the Denny Party landing in 1851, the area's starring role in local history goes unnoticed.

"The log house acquisition will help to change that," Wade says. "We're an energetic, committed group, and we welcome the help and support of those who wish to help bring this dream of a museum to reality."

For more information, call Hagen at 935-3442 or Wade at 937-7494.

### FOOTPRINTS

(Editors: Clay Eals, Brad Chrisman)

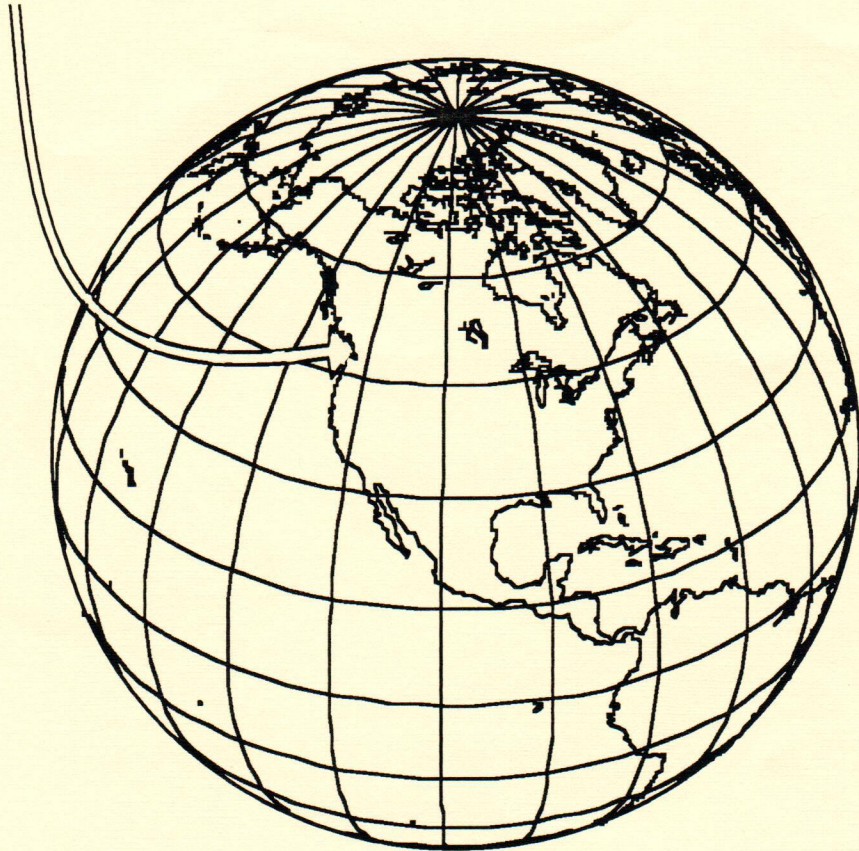
Newsletter of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society  
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6000 16th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98106

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You're invited to an  
**EARTH DAY**  
**WORK PARTY**

Saturday, April 22, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
at the Birthplace of Seattle Log House Museum



**Want to help clean up the Earth on Earth Day, but don't know where to begin?**  
How about starting with our own little corner of the world – 61st Avenue Southwest and Southwest Stevens Street! Join other Southwest Seattle Historical Society members as we give the old Log House an old-fashioned spring cleaning. There's lots to do: raking, mowing, sweeping, moving bricks, cleaning debris, washing windows. Just call **938-5293** and let us know if you're coming so we can plan ahead for refreshments.

**SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

c/o South Seattle Community College • 6000 16th Ave. S.W. • Seattle, WA 98106