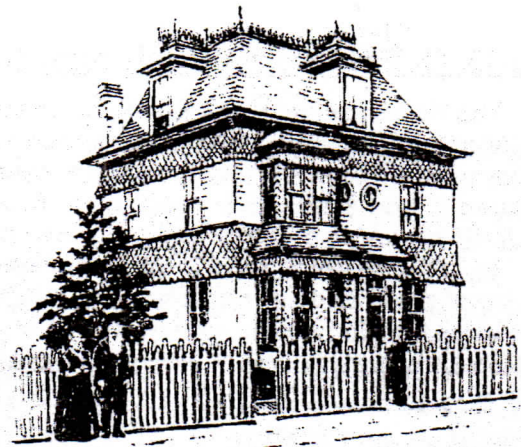


STANWOOD AREA ECHOES

Newsletter of the
STANWOOD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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D. O. Pearson House History

Past issues of the Echoes have profiled various local historic places, but so far we have not compiled a good history of the D. O. Pearson House. The following is a brief account of why it has come to embody so much of Stanwood's history.

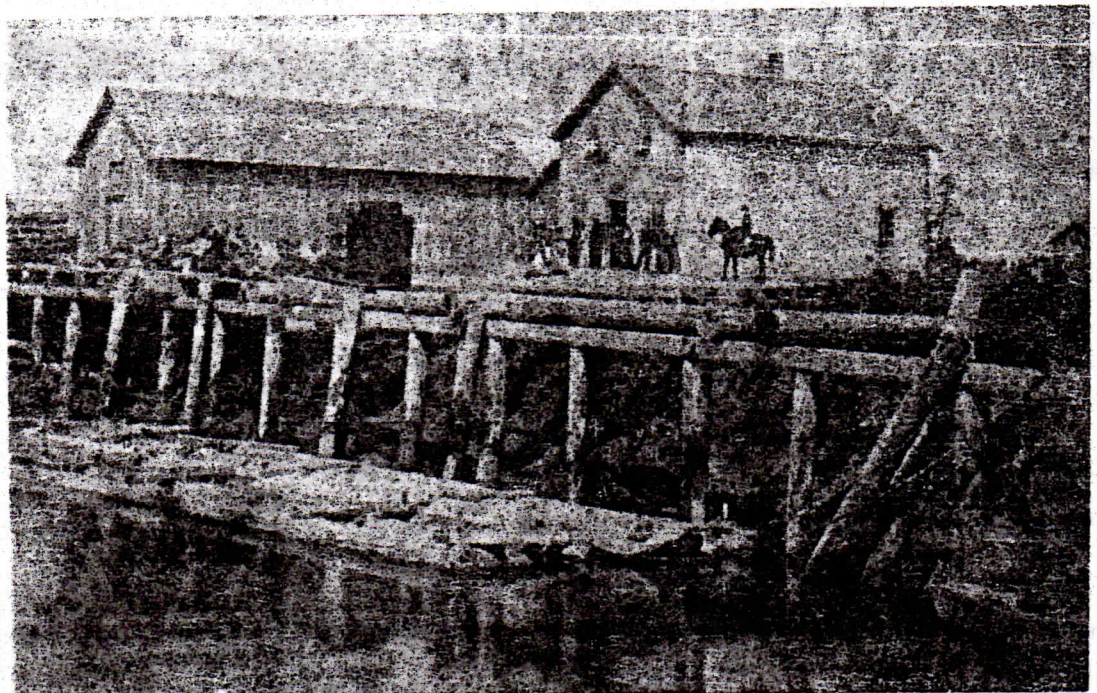
The story begins with D. O. Pearson and his wife Clara Jane Stanwood. After 100 days as a volunteer in the 6th Massachusetts Infantry during the Civil War followed by a brief career as a painter, Daniel Orlando traveled to the Pacific Northwest at the age of 20. In 1866 he came around the horn on the second Mercer Expedition with his mother and sister Flora¹ to join his father, Daniel Pearson. The elder Pearson and his two daughters had come on the first Mercer Expedition from Lowell, Massachusetts two years earlier. In 1868, D. O. was joined by young Clara Stanwood whom he knew from Lowell. She traveled through the Isthmus of Panama by herself and they were married.

They farmed on Whidbey Island until 1877 when D. O. leased a tract of land in Centerville from Henry Oliver on the mouth of the Stillaguamish River where he built a wharf, store and warehouse.

At this time

Centerville wasn't yet a regular steamboat stop and the mail came twice a week from Utsalady on Camano Island. He took over the postmaster duties in this small trading post and was apparently requested to change the post office designation to something less common - and chose "Stanwood" to honor his wife.

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D. O. Pearson's first store, warehouse and the wharf he built to create a place for steamboats to dock and deliver goods. [SAHS 83.07.03.21]

Sample news item from the Daily Intelligencer, Wed. Sept. 5, 1877 under Steamboat items: "The "Wenat" has taken out a passenger license and will leave here for Centerville and Skagit City this morning."

**Inside: Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center Progress Report, p. 5 →→
& Clara Stanwood Pearson Day Open House March 17th**

The D. O. Pearson House History, cont'd.

The Pearsons were successful for several years during the 1880's. His store and warehouse served logging camps, shingle mills, the surrounding hay and oat farms and Native Americans in the area. Other nearby communities at the time were Utsalady, where a large mill was operated by the Puget Mill Company, and Florence, a small town six miles up the winding river. In 1889, Stanwood was platted by W. R. Stockbridge and Pearson built his second store along the river.

In 1890, Pearson ran for State Representative as a Republican and lost. But his store was often a center of political debate and activity. On the topic of moving the Snohomish County seat from Snohomish to Everett he was quoted as saying, "I don't believe in moving the court house eight or ten miles and putting it under the command of the Everett Land Company."²

Text of the advertisement for lots between the depot and the Stanwood waterfront:

"Depot Addition

The Town of Stanwood

To Investors: Stanwood situated on the Great Northern Railroad near the mouth of the Stillaguamish River, is a town of nearly one thousand inhabitants and growing rapidly. There has been for a long time inquiries as to when and where the Station at Stanwood would lie, by parties anxious to secure lots and property near the Station. This addition is in the center of the best agricultural district on Puget Sound.

We are now the second and will soon be the first city in Snohomish County. There is an abundance of good land and water, with daily mail communication both north and south. Inductments will be offered to ANY Manufactories to locate here. Now is the Time to get in on the ground floor, as the price of lots will be placed at figures within the reach of all. The cars will be running by the 15th of October on the Great Northern Railroad, and after that time the lots will be doubled in price. The lots are all level, and need no street grading, thus saving great expense to property owners. The Plat of the Addition can be seen at the store of D. O. Pearson. Also terms and prices."

It is around this time that the Pearson's were building their new "mansion." The actual date the Pearson House was constructed is a bit hazy. An account by daughter Eva, who would have been about 17, says the house "was built over a little four-room cottage on property turned over to D. O. by a logger for money owed him" but County records show he purchased the two lots for \$300 from W. R. Stockbridge November 22, 1890.

According to daughter Eva, because of future hardships the family was never able to finish the interior of the house. The family had "lathed and plastered the walls but a cold night came on and froze it so it had to be done over." The attic never had a finished layer of plaster and had hooks in the ceiling of ten foot square to curtain off a bedroom when needed."³

In 1891, the riverfront community began to change with the arrival of the Seattle & Montana R. R. (later Great Northern R. R.) connecting to Seattle and points north. A small commercial district that started around the depot one mile east of Stanwood began to compete with the waterfront trade. D. O. Pearson and George Ketchum (another local storekeeper) bought land between the two towns and tried to sell lots but the 1893 Panic forced him to liquidate these and other holdings near LaConnor. A recently discovered fragment of an October 17th 1891 Stanwood Post newspaper contains his advertisement of this effort. It contains some exaggerations but hopeful promotion of this new pioneer town struggling to develop an economic base.



In 1898, many men in Stanwood left to make their fortunes in the Klondike Gold Rush. Indeed, some came back successful enough to buy up land and start new businesses. Soon the small town began to talk of incorporating. Finally, in 1903 the

town became incorporated as a 4th class town; the first elections were held. D. O. Pearson was elected mayor narrowly. He served two terms and started a water system from a spring a mile and a half east, and put in a pump at the river for fire protection among other things municipal.

The following year, the Bank of Stanwood was incorporated and D. O. Pearson christened its street railway, the H & H Railroad, by pounding in the last spike. Then in 1906, Pearson built his third store, away from the waterfront which was beginning to become somewhat run down. The waterfront was now more industrial with two large mills creating much noise and smoke, making it less useful as a commercial area.



For those familiar with the Pearson House, this is the configuration of the back porch and gardens in the earliest days. Note the spinning clothesline, the climbing roses, details painted on the chimney by Guy Pearson, the oldest son who died in 1906.

In 1910, Clara Pearson died. D. O. continued to operate the store and was joined by his third son, Fred Pearson. In 1920, Fred brought his family to live at the Pearson House when a fire destroyed his home on the west end of town. Except for Fred, most of the family grew up, married and left the area. D. O. died in 1929 and Fred operated the store until 1954 when he died and the house was sold to the Borreson's. The store was sold to the Ferris Mattress Company which is now the Cobblestone Restaurant.

The unique features of the house include its mansard roof and roof cresting which identify the architectural style of the house to be Second Empire, a style popular from the 1850's to 1880's referring to the reign of Napoleon III of France where it was developed. It is a very unusual style for the West Coast but was popular following the Civil War on the East coast.

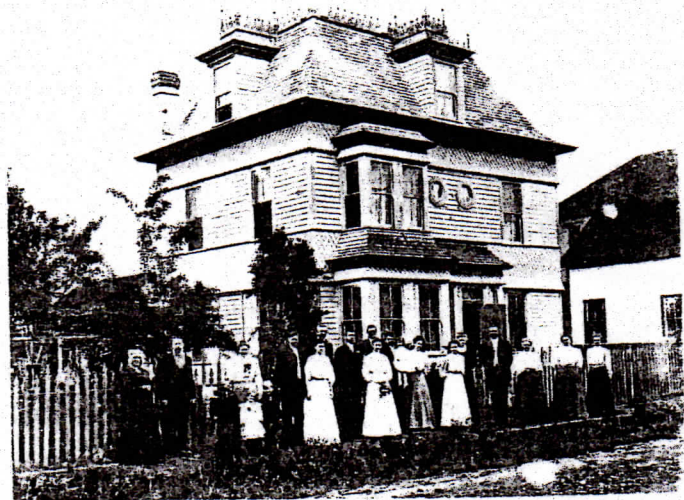
The porthole windows light closets on the second floor. The original diamond cut cedar shingles have survived now for over 100 years.

Bay windows at the southeast corner "catch the sun." At the back was a one story utility wing containing the laundry room and bathroom added around 1929.

Until the 1970's the kitchen opened to a south-facing porch. Farthest back was a woodhouse. Clara Pearson grew climbing roses up the wall and had a vegetable garden in the yard. A fireplace was added to the interior parlor to replace a stove and chimney that smoked. The remains of current chimney are of this second chimney.

Though an eccentric style, this house is somewhat modest compared to many in Stanwood now. But for a brief time, this three story house was possibly one of the most impressive between Snohomish, Coupeville and LaConnor.

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This Pearson Family photograph is by John T. Wagness. It was taken in about 1905 showing the roof cresting, wooden sidewalks and unpaved streets. On the right are early glimpses the Tolin House and Stanwood (IOOF) Public & Fraternal Hall (currently being rehabilitated by SAHS). 92.07.02b

The Pearson House's recent existence as a historic house started when it was operated by Mr. & Mrs. Hart in the 1960's and 70's as the Heritage House. It was purchased by Mr. and Mrs Frank Noble who continued sell antiques in it and applied for it to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. After the sudden death of Mr. Noble, the Historical Society was interested in purchasing the House and Mrs. Noble agreed to sell it for \$22,500. In 1974 a fund-raising effort was begun and in June of 1975 the society had raised enough to pay a \$16,000 down payment and assume an underlying mortgage for \$6,500. Final payment was made and mortgage burning ceremony was held in 1986.



Apologies to Francis Giard who brought in the photograph above of the Giard family home. Our 2002 Historic Photograph Calendar printed a photograph of a house that was misidentified as the Giard home. The real Giard home (above) was located in "East Stanwood" on the south west corner of 88th and 271st (now the Skagit Farmers Supply.) The house had been surrounded by the Giard farm where he grew berries.

Mr. Giard Sr. made his fortune gold mining in Alaska and came back and invested in the Bank of Stanwood. The beautiful "romanesque" tower was built by local craftsmen. When it needed to be repaired years later, no one knew how to fix it. The house was torn down in 1964 and replaced by a service station and the Viking Village Shopping Center.

In the foreground in front of the fence were the tracks of the H & H Railroad, the small independent street railway also, and more notably, used to haul lumber and other freight one mile between the depot and the waterfront.

References:

¹ Flora A. P. Engle "The Story of the Mercer Expeditions"

Washington Historical Quarterly, v. VI, no. 4, October, 1915.

² At the time, Everett was just beginning to be developed and would soon overtake surrounding established much earlier, like Mukilteo, Utsalady and Stanwood.

³ The hooks were there until 1999 when the Historical Society finally finished the attic to make it useable as exhibit space.

Other resources include The Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish County (1906, reprinted 2000), a series of news articles entitled the "History of the Twin Cities" by Gustav Joergenson appearing in the Twin City News in 1949; U. S. Postal Service documents, the Pearson Scrapbook held at the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections; "A Particular Friend, PENN'S COVE" by Jimmie Jean Cook, (Island County Historical Society, 1973) and By Canoe & Sailing Ship They Came by Dorothy Neil & Lee Brainard (Spindrift Publishing, 1989.) Plus assorted articles and vital records relating to the family. Special thanks to **Claire Payne, Gloria Stigall and Jean Hanson** for sharing memories and photographs of the Pearson Family.