

Stanwood Area ECHOES

Newsletter of the Stanwood Area Historical Society
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Stanwood Area Echoes

Issue No. 66 : Spring, 2020

THE STANWOOD FLYER, MAY 1907



"The Stanwood Flyer" was the name of this neat little automobile that was one of the first two cars to come to Stanwood. Owner Dr. E. L. Hogan is at the wheel; Capt. Charles Durgan is next to him. Dr. Daniel McEachern, George Ketchum and A. E. Klaeboe are in the back seat. The photographer was John Wagness.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends:

There has never been a generation which has escaped crises, whether they be economic, human generated as war or disasters brought by nature. This pandemic is no exception. It is not our reaction but our action that will define us in this generation in light of the current challenges.

I have written in the past about the problems faced at the Stanwood Area Historical Society, from dwindling participation to deteriorating historical buildings. We, as with other non-profits and businesses, received a body blow by the necessity to close the museum, cancel rentals of the Floyd, suspend fund raisers and isolate ourselves away from the patrons we look forward to serving. We are also cognizant of protecting our core of volunteers and staff, most of whom fall into the demographic group with greatest vulnerability to this disease. Some of us will rise from these difficulties while some will suffer a fatal shock. We are doing everything we know how to do to ensure the continuance of the Historical Society, but ultimately that will depend on the support and generosity of the community.

Ironically, as with others, we had begun what appeared to be a healthy year ahead in 2020. The Snow Goose and Birding Festival was a great success with upward of a thousand people attending lectures, viewing incredible art and visiting the wonderful creatures we celebrate on bus tours. Business sponsorships exceeded our hopes thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of Cliff Larson and the generosity of some supporters. Our Spring Tea committee was seeing vigorous ticket sales and this key fundraiser also seemed on track for a major success. While the bills never cease arriving, our ability to pay them lessens. We do not anticipate any return to normal in the near or even extended future and history of a hundred years ago teaches us that next fall could be even more serious than what we are experiencing now.

State and local officials, while amassing resources for non-profits, have made it known that only essential services shall have priority. We certainly understand this and realize the unique place we have in a community. We are holders and gatekeepers of the collective memory. Our efforts do not feed the poor or clothe the needy, but we believe our

institution does sustain the heart and soul of a community. For us to survive this crisis, we hope that others will understand the long-term value of supporting institutions such as ours.

If there is one point of light in the darkness of this pandemic, it is perception and awareness. This crisis forces a reassessment, of ourselves, the people around us, our relationships to them and others, and to the definition of community. We are getting a reminder and a chance to find what is essential to making us who we are.

Stay safe and be hopeful.

Sincerely,

Richard Hanks, President

Stanwood Area Historical Society

Stanwood Area Historical Society Board of Trustees

Effective January 1, 2020

OFFICERS TERM (2Yr)

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Robert Branigin	2019-2021
Kathy Uroff	2019-2021
Pat Bronson	Lifetime Trustee

Richard & Robin Hanks Newsletter Editors

SO LONG AS THEY DO COME



SAHS# 93.28.21

This photograph, ca. 1925, is of the Depot Service Station and gas pump in East Stanwood

Peter Hugill wrote that “the 1920s saw the complete realization of an automobile way of life.” Cars and the mobility they offered changed the nature of travel and leisure time for Americans and started the development of a new industry, one that still dots the highways of America today. The early 1920s saw that boom in travel come to the doorstep of Stanwood. A headline in the *Stanwood News* of July 6, 1922 declared that a “Mighty Tide Of Sightseers Sets This Way,” explaining that “the greatest fleet of automobiles which this part of the United States has ever seen has been passing thru Stanwood for the past week in an almost uninterrupted stream.”

The article continued that “some of [the cars] are heavily laden under a troubled mountain of bedding, squirming dogs and crying children, while some carry richly clad and serene passengers, whose modern, compact camping things proclaim their wealthy station in life.” This was evidence of the shift of car ownership from a luxury enjoyed by the wealthy to one of middle-class affordability. It was said that car plates showed the cascade of tourists were from “all over the North American continent.” The destinations for many that summer in 1922 were the auto parks of East Stanwood and Stanwood.

Stanwood had been alerted and therefore was prepared to take advantage of this new shift in the vacationing habits of Americans. It came from Herbert Cuthbert of the Pacific Northwest Tourist

Association in February of 1922. “Remember the reputation of a place depends not only on its scenery but on the service rendered to tourists...impress them with the fact that you desire to have them amongst you.” He added “don’t worry as to which way they come, so long as they do come.”

The first articles and books praising auto-camping began around 1910 when the country had an estimated 500,000 registered cars. David Lewis, et al, said that at that time “...autocamping served a widely felt need to break with conventional manners, to restore a lost individuality, to discover new perspectives, to experience new intimacies with family members and motoring strangers....” By 1920 there were eight million cars registered in the U. S. with many used to find the freedom of travel expressed by Lewis. Scholar Warren Belasco wrote that until about 1920 auto-camping remained “an entirely uncommercial, spontaneous activity.” This back to nature movement has been dubbed the vagabonding or gypsy stage of the era.

But those free campers also left behind their debris and litter upsetting rural residents such as farmers who began posting no trespassing signs. Business owners, however, noticed the increased trade brought by the influx of motorized visitors and pressured towns to create their own free auto camps. Not surprisingly the Commercial Clubs (precursors

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to Chambers of Commerce) of Stanwood and East Stanwood rallied to get their respective auto parks operational. East Stanwood had just incorporated as its own city nine days prior to Cuthbert's optimistic predictions of a mighty tide of tourists coming to the area. East Stanwood secured an area north of the condensery and across the highway (approximately just across from the Northwest Veterinary Clinic today). A call to its citizenry on April 20th was to come together, clear the land and make "every possible convenience for the 'tin can tourists...'" a goal seemingly met by the end of the month. Since tourists would likely enter through East Stanwood initially, it hoped to get first take on the campers.

At that same time, a mile to the west in Stanwood, property was purchased for \$500 behind John Wickdall's home along north Market Street and a holiday was declared, accompanied by an open-air supper for volunteers, to prepare their auto camp. By mid-May water had been installed along with showers and an out-door stove protected by an overhang was built. Perhaps to counter its eastern competitor, signs directing visitors to the west Stanwood camp were posted on the highway leading into the dueling communities.

The impact on the wandering travelers was immediately apparent. A register book at the Stanwood camp filled up with grateful "paens of praise," reported the local newspaper. One wrote that they were leaving the city with a smile and the city's "thoughtfulness" was noted. Another admitted that they had "never heard of Stanwood before but will have good cause to remember now." The only complaints were the lack of shade trees and the brightness of "moonshine" at night (the light not the drink). Stanwood's camp reputation had some lasting power under the management of Charles McKean, the chairman of the Commercial Club's committee. In the summer of 1924, the Stanwood News proclaimed that McKean had brought the camp "to its present standard of excellence." The local barber is also given credit as a force behind securing support to pave Stanwood's

streets in previous years.

Belasco wrote that "comparing camps became an integral part of the tourist routine." In the 1924 article an unidentified California camper stopped at Horace Paine's service station to laud the cleanliness of Stanwood's auto park. "I have stopped at auto camps practically from border to border," said the tourist, "and I have never seen one which is so well looked after as yours. Others I stopped at were larger, but no more comfortable, and certainly not so clean." He just thought the people of Stanwood should know and encouraged the local paper's publication of his opinion. It seems that Stanwood heeded Cuthbert's admonitions that a town's reputation depends on scenery and service; 'let them get full value for what they pay for.'

But cities would also be forced to begin charging for camp maintenance. According to Belasco, by 1923 cities began charging a small fee for staying in the municipal camps in order to finance rising costs and to screen out "undesirables." This opened the door for competing entrepreneurs who began offering better services including cabins equipped with stoves, beds and indoor plumbing for tourists desiring more comfort and privacy. This movement corresponds with the dawn of beach resort areas on Camano Island such as Madrona in 1926 and Cama Beach in May of 1934. Ultimately, wrote Belasco, "the gypsy gave way to the consumer, not because the urge to stray off the beaten path was insincere or unimportant but because the bourgeois route was safer and easier."

The advent of cabins leading to the develop-





SAHS# 992.112.08.01

An aerial photograph, ca. 1955, of East Stanwood before Highway 532 when PictSweet Foods operated in the condensery building.

ment of the motel industry may have spelled the end to the seemingly short-lived auto parks of Stanwood and East Stanwood. However, the words of William Chalmers Covert, quoted by scholar Larry Harmon, perhaps shed a light on what encouraged their birth: "Every time a man sees something new in the world, he finds something new in himself. What a man thinks of the trees and birds, of the sea and mountains and the whole panorama of the summer spectacle, is an exposition of himself. What you see reveals you. We do not so much interpret nature — for nature needs but little interpretation ~ we interpret ourselves."

by Richard Hanks

(Sources: Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*, (1997); Peter J. Hugill, "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States, 1880-1929," *Geographical Review*, v. 72, no. 3, (July 1982); David Leroy Harmon, "American camp culture: a history of recreational vehicle development and leisure camping in the United States, 1890-1960," (2001), *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*, <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/433>; Alice Essex, *The Stanwood Story*, v. 2, pp. 29, 33, 56; *Stanwood News*, Feb. 16, 1922, April 20, 1922, April 27, 1922, May 18, 1922, June 1, 1922, June 15, 1922, July 6, 1922, August 21, 1924, Special thanks to volunteer Bill Blandin for his newspaper research which contributed to this article).

SAHS Memorials

In Memory Of:

Betty Christoferson	Margaret Utgard
Earl Sundberg	Jane Swartz
Jim Warr	Margaret Utgard
Marcella Giard	Margaret Utgard
Johan Gedstad	Margaret Utgard
Margaret Logen	Barbara Logen
Dan Logen	Barbara Logen

SAHS Donations

Anonymous
Camwood Genealogy Workshop
Bill and Alice Blandin
Jane Sundberg Swartz
Don Simonson

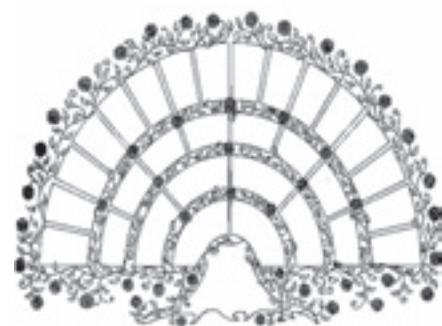


**The Floyd Norgaard
Cultural Center,
The Pearson House &
The Eldridge Center**

Operated By

**Stanwood Area
Historical Society
360-629-6110**

**The SAHS Complex is
CLOSED UNTIL
COVID-19 is history.**



Family History Researchers!

Camwood Genealogy Workshop normally meets the **FIRST** Monday of each month at 1 p.m. on the 2nd floor of the Eldridge Center.

For more information, call Bill Blandin,
360-387-3375

SAHS Board Meetings are normally held every month on the Third Monday at noon on the second floor of the Eldridge Research Center. However, the March and April meetings have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please visit our websites or facebook pages to keep informed of our operation.

We would like to thank our 2020 business sponsors who have stood by us throughout this COVID-19 crisis. Please support them!



THE FLOYD IS CLOSED.



The Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center Public Hall is available for the arts, music, theater, cultural events as well as a banquet hall for family events, weddings, reunions, birthdays, conferences & business meetings.

Proceeds from rentals and events benefit the continuing preservation and rehabilitation of the Public Hall and SAHS educational and historical projects and programs.

To get prices or make a reservation, text or call 360-629-2972, email us at sahs.diane@gmail.com or visit us at thefloydnorgaard.weebly.com.

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GET INVOLVED...STAY IN TOUCH

The Stanwood Area Historical Society is a special place. It collects and conserves the wondrous treasures of history that define our community. Your participation would not only assist in this crucial protection of our past, but would make you part of our important work. You can make a difference. Join SAHS today!

Memberships are due annually in January. This is a significant means of support for the Society and includes a subscription to the newsletter. SAHS is a tax-exempt non-profit organization and depends on gifts, bequests from individuals and groups, fundraising activities and membership dues for its financial support. Your contributions are tax deductible and will be used only for the preservation of the history of our area.

☐ Individual Membership: **\$20.00**

☐ Donation: \$_____

☐ Family Membership: **\$25.00**

☐ Memorial: \$_____ in memory of

☐ Student (Under 15) Membership: **\$5.00**

Name [Please print] _____

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P. O. Box 69 ~~~ 27112 102nd Ave. N. W., Stanwood, Washington ~~~ www.sahs-fncc.org Photographer: G. D. Horton, circa 1886, Stanwood Stillaguamish River Waterfront

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