

Stanwood Area ECHOES

Newsletter of the Stanwood Area Historical Society
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Stanwood Area Echoes

Issue No. 64 : Fall, 2019

THE I.O.O.F. PUBLIC HALL CA. 1910



SAHS 92.125.14

This is a photograph of men, women and children in front of the Public Hall taken after 1908 when the I.O.O.F. purchased the hall (emblem above the door) and 1912 when the streets were paved. Upon closer scrutiny, the sign next to the door indicates The New York Motion Picture Co., a company that lasted from 1909-1914, was showing a Ranchman film, a typical western adventure thriller.

For more on The Floyd see page 3.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends:

The shifting winds and bursting colors of the changing fall season are at hand as another summer slips into memory. The third annual Stanwood / Camano Historic Sites Tour in September was again a wonderful convergence of entertainment and learning as people attended the multiple venues on the Island and in Stanwood. We conducted an open house at the Historical Society complex featuring new exhibits at the Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center and access to the 1890 Pearson home where volunteer Lenni Corser, in period dress, again greeted visitors with stories of the Pearson family. Dave Eldridge with his vast knowledge of the area, provided well attended lectures on the history of the community.

The Floyd's new upper floor exhibits could not have been accomplished without the tireless and creative efforts of Janet Mayer, Janet Larson, Sandy Robinson, Karen Prasse, Janet Utgard, Linda Albert, Diane Anderson, Ramona Snowden and my wife Robin Hanks—thank you. Diane's walking tours of Stanwood were an important feature of the day. If you haven't been to the Historical Society lately, I encourage all to see the displays entitled *Centerville Forward* that examine the Klondike gold strike of 1898, the resort era of Camano Island and the consolidation of the twin cities, to name just some of the stories told through the new presentations.

I also gave a talk on the history of the Floyd (before it was the Floyd) during the Sites tour entitled "If the Walls Could Talk" incorporating a recent (or at least forgotten) discovery in the old ticket booth of the Floyd. An article by the same name is included in this newsletter. The small ticket room had been used for storage for nearly two decades but closer examination gave us a rare insight into the unique role the Floyd played in the early beginnings of Stanwood. The walls of the little booth, when exposed by light, are decorated with the names and dates of those who either came to be entertained and inspired or of those who did the performing and inspiring. The signatures range roughly from 1903 to 1933 and have quadrupled the number of activities that we now know were held at the Floyd. Some are scrawled with chalk or pen

while others are neatly inscribed on the rough wooden panels. It is a marvelous artifact in and of itself housed inside the historic gem that is the Floyd.

And as I have done in the past, I reach out to the community to help us sustain the life of this magnificent building and repository of memories. People rallied in the early 2000s to save the structure and our gratitude could not be greater. But without the continued assistance of the community, this building and indeed the Historical Society, which is its caretaker, cannot survive. My appeals for financial help to the state and county proceed, but without people we cannot oversee this complex of historic structures and the contents of its collections. Whether it is a few hours a week or a month, we need the participation of the community to ensure that the legacy of Stanwood history will have a future. The walls of the Floyd remind us of all who found joy or comfort within them. We ask that you help us pass along their stories to new generations who will add their own stories to the tapestry of this area's history.

Sincerely,

Richard Hanks, President

Stanwood Area Historical Society

Stanwood Area Historical Society

Effective January 1, 2019

<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>TERM (2Yr)</u>
President , Richard Hanks	2019-2020
Vice President , Dan Lien	2018-2019
Recording Secretary , John Smistad	2019-2020
Corr. Secretary , Margaret Utgard	2019-2020
Treasurer , Dave Eldridge	2018-2019
<u>TRUSTEES</u>	<u>TERM (3Yr)</u>
Janet Mayer	2017-2019
Sandy Robinson	2017-2019
Clifford Larson	2018-2020
Mary Margaret Haugen	2018-2020
Robert Branigin	2019-2021
Kathy Uroff	2019-2021
Pat Bronson	Lifetime Trustee

THE FLOYD: IF THE WALLS COULD TALK

Their voices have long ago gone silent but their memories mark the rough walls of the cramped, dark ticket booth inside the Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center. Scribblings of names and dates scratched onto the aged wood act as testimony to that moment which prodded their action to remember, or be remembered. Young men such as Eddie Lawson and Chuck Hood who excitedly scrawled their names along with the notation that Al's Dance Band was appearing at the Hall. Yes, they're gone but the walls tell us something of their lives. Saved from destruction in 2000, the restored Floyd houses the memories of the past and provides a home for new ones today.

As community halls go, the Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center is certainly a grand old lady at the age of 117. When first opened February 1, 1902, it was called "an ornament to the town" and "one of the finest amusement halls in this part of the state." Originally dubbed the Foresters' Hall or Fraternal Hall, it later became the Public Hall and inclusively the Opera House. It was also the I.O.O.F. Hall owned by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows from 1908 until 1939.

Foresters from the Stanwood area organized the Stanwood Fraternal Association and built the large two-story structure laying its foundation in July 1901. The officers initially in charge were President Edward Lewis Potter, Secretary Thomas Murphine and Treasurer George J. Ketchum. Ketchum, Ira Galloupe, and Frank Connors were trustees. The Foresters initially offered a series of dances in the Hall's lower floor and a fund raiser was held to finish the front sidewalks. Balls, concerts and traveling shows followed such as the Clifford and Russell Comedy companies; The Russell Company recording their pleasure on the wall that Stanwood was a "good house." Minstrel shows also came to the Public Hall. It was host in 1904 to Alexander's Plantation Minstrels and in 1911 and to T. J. Culligan's Nashville Students Company. These rarer all-black companies of performers emphasized music and dance performances and subtly satirized racial stereotypes in their skits even as they inadvertently validated prejudiced impressions of the deep South after the Civil War for particularly receptive white crowds.



Congressman Victor Murdock's signature on the wall dated Oct. 21, 1911.

Despite the optimism which greeted the Hall's opening in 1902, three of its founding officers soon left Stanwood in search of other pursuits, perhaps leaving a void in the Hall's operations since four short years after its opening, the Hall was seized by the sheriff and offered at auction. Anton Anderson purchased the building and sold it to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows for \$700 in 1908. D. Carl Pearson was the first Noble Grand of the I.O.O.F. Edward Tolin, whose small home sits today just south of the Floyd, was the Hall manager. Seventeen candidates were initiated at the organization's inauguration.

That same year the famed Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen brought accounts of his exploits to the now I.O.O.F. Hall. His maps and canvas renderings detailed the perils and adventures of navigating treacherous arctic seas to become the first voyager to traverse the elusive Northwest Passage. (See Echoes Issue No. 49, Winter 2016). It may have been Stanwood's large Nordic community that attracted celebrity Norwegian mezzo soprano Olivia Dahl who added the town's Fraternal Hall to her first American tour two years earlier. She added "Norwegians here" to her precise signature on the wall. On April 24, 1910, the Fritjof Lodge of Stanwood's Sons of Norway was organized inside the Odd Fellows Hall. Renowned Norwegian soprano Inga Orner of the New York Metropolitan Opera Company came in 1915.

Other fraternal organizations such as the Ancient Order of United Workmen, Woodmen of the World and the American Legion benefited by being allowed to use the Odd Fellows' second floor meeting room. The Odd Fellows, as with the Foresters,

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arranged a variety of events in the Hall's lower floor such as presentations by the Stillaguamish Band and Stanwood Glee Club or a performance of the Clare Vaughn Wales Concert Company. A "hard times ball" was held in December of 1909 by the Fire Department. That same year, local farmers and business men of Stanwood gathered at the Hall for a mass meeting resulting in creation of the Washington Canning Company. The I.O.O.F. Hall, stated writer Alice Essex, was the venue for stage plays, touring vaudeville shows, dances, and concerts along with school and community events on its red-velvet-curtained stage. It was the community auditorium, dance hall and opera house.

People were also introduced to more curious diversions. In November 1911 the "Marvelous Ayesha," touted as the "only woman hypnotist in the world," awed an audience by inducing trance states in willing participants. "A weird entertainment," wrote the local paper, "with just enough scientific work to be convincing."



Clyde Tolin in a play at the I.O.O.F. Public Hall ca. 1913.

Required maintenance of the spacious hall has always been a challenge—it was in the early 20th century and it is today. In 1912, a year after the mesmerizing Ayesha, a facelift was needed. Everett house and sign painter Karl A. Hultman received praise as the decorator of the Hall's lower floor. Hultman would be Noble Grand of the Odd Fellows in 1916. C.N. Cobb of Everett completed the painting of a "swell curtain" to adorn the Opera House stage. The local paper wrote of the completed decoration work, that the "lodge room now is replete with artistic beauty." Area conventions, dances, band concerts and school debates dotted the schedule of the Public Hall in the early 1900s. Home grown talent was on display when the boys of the K.O.I.S. club put on a lively production in 1913. These "young men-about-town" provided "two hours of fun," the newspaper wrote; "very bright in its comic touches" much to the crowd's great amusement. Even the reporter was unsure what K.O.I.S. stood for but its ranks included young civic leaders to be such as Clyde Tolin, George Astel, Arthur Knudson and Alf Moe. Names today that still adorn the walls where they performed as does a notation that the Jolly Entertainers came in 1915 and 1916. These orphans from Des Moines became musicians and performers through instruction by Herman Draper and his wife and would tour Canada and 38 states before the Drapers' deaths in 1927.

Chautauqua circuit speakers such as John B. Ratto also found willing audiences at the Public Hall. A successor to lyceums of the early 19th century, Chautauquas, by 1900, were an organized movement of circuit speakers and performers meant to expose Americans to new ideas and areas of public concern. Ratto was an impersonator of unusual versatility who transformed on stage into his chosen personas by which he could sway his audience "from screams of delight to tears of sadness at will."

In tune with the populist sentiments apparent in the Stanwood area at the turn of the century, Progressive "insurgent" and Congressman, Victor Murdock spoke at the I.O.O.F. Hall in October 1911. His "timely, powerful [and] dramatic" talk awed the crowd. The newspaper reported that "if you want to be rejuvenated, lifted into a clear atmosphere, inspired with a new set of ideas and a new interest in life, you should sit for an hour under the sledge hammer blows of Hon. Victor Murdock's rhetoric." The Congressman paused long enough to leave his neatly penned signature on the wall.



Another popular figure on the Chautauqua circuit was Elizabeth Tucker, who in 1913 included Stanwood as part of her western tour. A graduate of the New York School of Expression, she found an enthusiastic crowd for her "repertoire of varied nature;" readings such as "Hiawatha's Wooing" which an


Alaska paper noted was "worth the price of admission alone." Music lovers thrilled to a demonstration of Tom Edison's phonograph during a 1917 program. New York violinist A. C. Murray played simultaneously with the manufactured recording intending to prove the tonal accuracy of Edison's technological marvel.

About this time amateur wrestling and boxing matches called "smokers" became popular at the Odd Fellows Hall and would continue for over a decade. In 1916 Olav Evansen of Utsalady took on rival Warren Hardy of Seattle. Locals Stephen Floe and Art Conners provided a side match. A 1924 main event was followed by bouts between boys from Stanwood and Mount Vernon.

Wear and tear on the great building again began showing in 1921 forcing another re-model. The upstairs lodge room underwent a major transformation. Painter Karl Hultman again headed the project using shades of cream, ivory and light enamel to color the interior space and creating a border incorporating the three-link symbol of the Odd Fellows. Hultman also completed a series of murals on the lodge room walls; images of seemingly distant, desolate landscapes cryptically signifying the stages through which candidates progress. Raised platforms extended along the length of the room on both sides which held benches for members. The Noble Grand and Vice Grand sat atop raised stations at either end of the room, flanked by two pillars topped by electric globes.

Perhaps revitalized by the fresh paint and added amenities, membership in the Odd Fellows surged. In March 1923 they were given a banner for the largest increase in new members in their district

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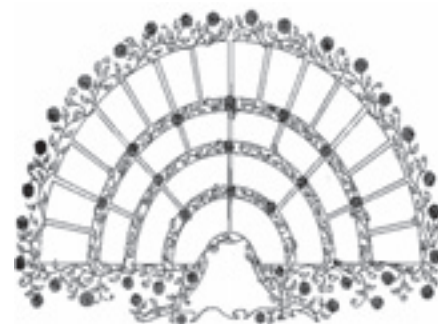
The Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center, The Pearson House & The Eldridge Center

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over the past six months. Expenses, however, still had to be met. In March of 1922 the Tidings announced the impending rental of the Hall's lower floor by the Stanwood Athletic Association for \$100 a year. The Association would fit the lower Hall as a gymnasium. Tales of half-court basketball games are corroborated by the etchings of game scores which decorate the Floyd's cloak room.

Dwindling membership forced the Stanwood Odd Fellows to merge with Mount Vernon's chapter in 1937. Two years later the joint I.O.O.F. sold the building to Ed and Marie Bryant who used it as a storage facility for their hardware store. A generous donation from the Norgaard family facilitated the purchase and resurrection of the deteriorating edifice by the Stanwood Area Historical Society in 2000. It was restored at a cost of over a million dollars by grants and the generosity of the community becoming today's Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center and a stimulus to the gentrification of west Stanwood. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

However, as in the past, the Floyd's survival is tenuous in the fast-paced world of today. In 1949 local lay historian Gustav Joergenson wrote about the then decaying I.O.O.F. Hall and the Fellows who had owned it: "Organizations may be started, but it is harder to keep them going, to hold the older members while you are getting new members." And so today the Floyd still struggles to keep its doors open and protect the memories of its walls. From the mundane to the mysterious and inspiring, the I.O.O.F. Public Hall welcomed visitors and residents to its shared space where people laughed and learned and where community was shaped. The Historical Society is the steward of that legacy but the people of the greater Stanwood area are the owners of it. As in the past this grande dame of halls survives only through the generosity of the people it serves.

by Richard Hanks

**SAHS Board & Member Meetings -
Please join us every month on the
Second Tuesday at 4:00 pm on the
second floor of the Eldridge Center.**

SAHS Memorials

In Memory Of:

Helen Tangen Heller	Margaret Utgard
Melvin Olsen	Janet Mayer Sandy Robinson
Fred Hall	Janet Mayer
Chuck Brown	Dennis & Shirley Anderson
Karen Anderson McMahan	Class of 1956
Alex Gedstad	Janet Mayer Dave & Bobbie Eldridge Richard & Robin Hanks Pat & Hi Bronson Dennis & Shirley Anderson Kathy Uroff Jerry & Rose King Bill Williams Mary Margaret Haugen Clayton Olsen Ken & Barbara Christoferson Virginia & Lester Filion Margaret Utgard Johan Gedstad The Family of Alex Gedstad Sandy Robinson Margaret Buse Gloria Schuh Connie Ronning

SAHS Donations

**Roberta Deister
Joni Smith
Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians**

EVENTS @ THE FLOYD

Nov. 9th • 11 a.m. - Noon
Veterans Day Celebration

Nov. 17th • 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Hors d'oeuvres & History
The Changing Shoreline of Camano

Dec. 3rd • 24 Hours
Stanwood Camano Giving Tuesday

Dec. 7th • 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Old Fashioned Christmas

Dec. 12th • 6 p.m.
SAHS Christmas Party

December 15 - TBA
Jeffrey Cohan & Jazzin' With The Classics

January 26 - TBA
Spiritus Winds Concert



RENT THE FLOYD



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, call our Business Manager, Diane Anderson, at 360-629-6110 or email her at sahs.diane@gmail.com.

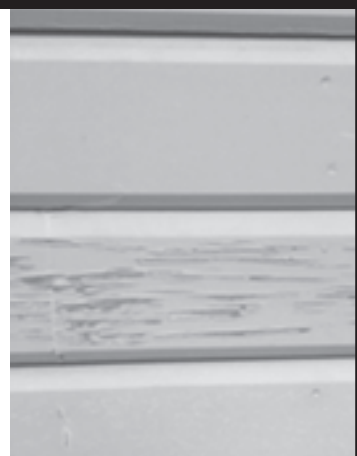
CRITICAL REPAIRS NEEDED FOR THE HISTORIC FLOYD



Dec. 3, 2019

#GIVINGTUESDAY • SCGIVE.ORG

Protect the integrity of this grand old 1902 Public Hall that the community valiantly saved in the early 2000s



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**

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

Family Membership: **\$25.00**

Lifetime Individual Membership (+65 yrs of age): **\$100.00**

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

OUR 2020 CALENDARS WILL BE ON SALE STARTING NOV. 1, 2019!

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