

Stanwood Area ECHOES

Newsletter of the Stanwood Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 69

27108 102nd Ave NW

Stanwood, WA 98292

www.sahs-fncc.org • sahsrh2@aol.com



Stanwood Area Echoes

Issue No. 65 : Winter, 2020

STANWOOD'S GREAT FIRE ON MAY 2, 1892



SAHS 92.41.73

This photograph was taken twenty-nine days after the fire that destroyed thirteen buildings including the first Lutheran Church on the corner of Market and Irvine Streets. A citizen bucket brigade and a water line from the steamer *Merwin* at the dock made a valient effort to save the town. The Melby House and the Pearson House were saved and the Pearson House still stands today.

For more on The Fire see page 3.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends:

As with past years, December 2019 proved to be very busy but also satisfying due to the success of events staged at the Floyd. December 7th was the 20th year of our Old Fashioned Christmas where children of all ages enjoyed free pictures with Santa. It's hard to express how much we appreciate the volunteer efforts of photographer Billy Jennings who took more than 450 shots of the kids and their family members. A similar number of gift bags were given to the children. Ed Pearson again supplied seasonal background music and our volunteers organized craft tables for the youngsters while they waited for a chance with the jolly big guy. We estimate that 1,300 people came through the Floyd that day, all reveling in the holiday spirit. This event was entirely free and one way that the Stanwood Area Historical Society gives back to the community.

December 15th saw one of my favorite concerts of the year. Flutist Jeffrey Cohan and fellow artists Tom Collier and Martin Lund returned to masterfully weave together music of the season, punctuated by strains of jazz and blues. This year they were joined by the remarkable jazz vocalist Gail Pettis. The improvisational skill of these musicians is truly a treat for the ears. Close to 100 people attended and afterwards worked to find the superlatives that could properly describe the evening.

Our Veteran's Day celebration in November was well attended and featured a dedication to the talented and well-trained service working dogs which are so capably utilized to help protect our troops when they are in harm's way. More recently we wish to thank Peggy Wendel and the staff of the Stanwood Camano News for their excellent article on the new exhibit at the Floyd, *Centreville Forward*. Peggy and Evan Caldwell are the heart and soul of the paper now and are doing a fantastic job with dwindling resources to bring local news to area residents.

The problems of dwindling resources continue to monopolize my thinking with the mounting challenges we face to keep the doors open at the Floyd and the Historical Society in general. My appeal and that of Bill Keller, the incoming Vice-President, ran recently in the Crab Cracker. We greatly appreciate the generous donation of one

patron soon after. I have tried for several years now to solicit the help of the community for funding to repair the historic buildings we oversee and for people to become involved, at whatever level they can, to help us caretake the memories of the community and find a way to sustain this institution into the future. Simply said, we cannot do this alone. We have limped along for years but without your assistance and that of the other residents of Stanwood and Camano, the future looks bleak. What I do know is that if the Historical Society fails to exist and the historic buildings we attempt to care for are sold off, people will one day wonder why the city does not have a museum. That will be a sad day.

Sincerely,

Richard Hanks, President

Stanwood Area Historical Society

Stanwood Area Historical Society Board of Trustees Effective January 1, 2020

OFFICERS	TERM (2Yr)
President , Richard Hanks	2019-2020
Vice President , Bill Keller	2020-2021
Recording Secretary , John Smistad	2019-2020
Corr. Secretary , Margaret Utgard	2019-2020
Treasurer , Robin Hanks	2020-2021

TRUSTEES	TERM (3Yr)
Lindsay Spoor	2020-2022
Tracy Gilroy	2020-2022
Clifford Larson	2018-2020
Dan Nelson (finishing the term)	2018-2020
Robert Branigin	2019-2021
Kathy Uroff	2019-2021
Pat Bronson	Lifetime Trustee

Richard & Robin Hanks

Newsletter Editors

FROM THE ASHES



This photograph of the wharf on June 21, 1889 shows the first Stanwood Hotel & Bon Ton Saloon that were destroyed in the great fire.

The latter 1880s saw a boom in Stanwood. Records were being set in the logging industry and new businesses sprang up along the dirt streets leading from the city wharf which stretched beside the Stillaguamish River. The year 1888 was dubbed by one county history as "one of Stanwood's best years." It witnessed new businesses such as a A. E. Klæboe's drug store (only the second in Snohomish County) and Knud Knudson's jewelry store. Dr. Daniel McEachern became the town's first trained physician. Boarders could find a room at the new Melby House adding to visitor accommodations along with the Stanwood Hotel and the Armstrong House on Market Street which ran north from the wharf-side businesses such as D. O. Pearson's mercantile.

Excitement grew in the spring of 1892 with news of a new race track constructed on a block along Market a bit past today's Masonic Hall. Snohomish resident Tamlin Elwell announced his lease of the property in April and vowed to make the track one of the best in the state. Elwell was a logger

by trade but had a passion for horse breeding and would become well-known throughout Snohomish County for his livery business. Although the Seattle & Montana railroad had decided to build a mile east of Stanwood out of the tidal flats, newspapers said that the rail line made Stanwood a center for "turfmen" of the state. Elwell promised that every race would be run "on the square," and put up his money as insurance against any rigging of the contests.

During the evening of May 2nd, however, disaster struck the community when a fire ravaged the downtown destroying a reported 13 buildings. News accounts say the fire erupted inside the Stanwood Hotel (not to be confused with today's current hotel) which was perhaps 300 feet from the wharf across Commercial and Broadway Streets fronting on Market Street. The fire was not discovered until the hotel was too engulfed in flames to save it or the Bon Ton saloon next door. Attention turned to the

(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued from Page 3)

Armstrong Hall and Louis Smith's mercantile across the street. Some reports say the Good Templars fraternity rushed from their meeting hall in full regalia and rendered efficient service to John Armstrong saving the stock of whiskey from his saloon. A hose line was quickly stretched from the steamer W. K. Merwin but it was not long enough. Additional hose was obtained but proved the wrong size. Men grabbed ladders and a bucket brigade was formed but the heat drove the men back and the Armstrong succumbed to the fire around 9 p.m. A stiff breeze from the south jumped the flames across Irvine Street attacking the Norwegian Lutheran Church. Hopes then centered on saving the general merchandise store of Norwegian immigrant Ole K. Melby. Men scaled the building to its roof and one newspaper reported that they "did not quit their post until the building caught fire inside from the intense heat and tongues of flame leaped from every window." The Melby hotel was the next target for the fast-moving blaze and flames soon began grabbing hold to its siding. The make shift firefighters, many of them loggers and boom men, began stripping off the burning boards while others used the water from a nearby slough to refresh their buckets. The energized effort and a lucky shift in the winds saved the hotel.

"The most singular spectacle," wrote one paper, "was the tower of the church standing a charred skeleton with its large bell, sixty feet from the ground, after all the other buildings had fallen. It too finally fell." That bell survives today in the steeple of Our Saviour's Church in Stanwood. Stanwood began rebuilding almost immediately and would soon put the devastation of losing the heart of its town behind it. Yet, one other fire two months later in mid-August 1892 would highlight a darker side of public interaction with far less heroism.

Almost simultaneous with Stanwood's great fire came passage of the Geary Act which extended the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 for another ten years. The original act and its extensions banned immigration by Chinese laborers wishing to come to America. Americans attributed economic ills such as declining wages to the presence of the Chinese. Tensions between the white majority of western Washington and Chinese workers boiled over in 1886 when violence against Seattle's Chinese community led to federal troops being dispatched by President Grover Cleveland to maintain order that summer.

Under the Geary Act Chinese residents were required to carry certificates from the Internal Revenue Service proving their residence. Those caught without such papers were subject to hard labor and deportation. One news report states that the Chinese of Stanwood were driven out of town following passage of the Geary Act except for the proprietors of a local wash-house. At least 17, now illegal Chinese, had reportedly taken refuge in a garret inside the wash-house until one evening the business "caught fire" and the outcasts were forced to crawl out of the burning ruin. The Chinese immigrants, now including the wash-house owners, were then forced out of Stanwood. Rumors of their whereabouts reached T.P. Hopp, an inspector employed by the Great Northern Railroad, who traveled to Stanwood to find the contrabands. Hopp looked to locate and round up the banned workers but it was believed that the Chinese had been secreted to nearby islands with the help of local Indians. A frustrated Hopp vowed to continue the search.

The town of Stanwood rose from the ashes following the great conflagration of 1892. Its citizens proved their resilience in the face of adversity. For the Chinese immigrants who had contributed to the town, fire was the agent of ethnic cleansing in a time of irrational fear. They too, however, would prove their resilience in pursuit of the promise of a better life since maps show a new Chinese laundry just west of downtown in 1905.

by Richard Hanks

Sources: An Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish Counties, 1906; Alice Essex, The Stanwood Story, vol. 1, pp. 5, 15, vol. 2, p. 35; Birth, death, census and data files of Ancestry.com; William Whitfield, History of Snohomish County, Washington, 1926; Seattle Daily Intelligencer, April 15, 26, May 23, June 2, 3, 1892; Seattle Post-Intelligencer, May 17, 1892; Phil Dougherty, Historylink Essay 2745; Findagrave; Chinese Exclusion Act, history.com; 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Stanwood.

**SAHS Board Meetings are held
every month on the Third Monday
at noon on the second floor of the
Eldridge Research Center & Archive.**

SAHS Memorials

In Memory Of:

Jim Fure	TCH Class of 1956
Alex Gedstad	Loren Kraetz
Rudi Mueller	Penny Buse
Violet Madsen	Pam Fugier
Rudi Mueller	Margaret Utgard
Violet Madsen	Margaret Utgard
Peg Ramberget Nelson	Ben Nelson
Rudi Mueller	Kathy Uroff
Donald Wilson	Clayton Olsen
Jim Lund	Pat Lund
Art & Beatrice Rod	Pat Lund
Robert "Bob" Olsen	Dennis & Shirley Anderson
Robert "Bob" Olsen	Les & Virginia Fillion
Betty A Christoferson	Janet Utgard
Robert "Bob" Olsen	Clayton & Joann Olsen
Dennis Pearson	TCH Class of 1956

SAHS Donations

Brandi Smith
Mike Ballard
Kathy Uroff
Connie Superson-Jacobs
Carol Triplett
Suzanne Gay
Mary Nema Gay
Pam Trojanoski
Robert Hall
Anonymous



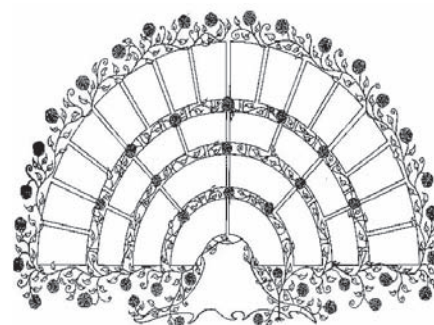
The Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center, The Pearson House & The Eldridge Center

Operated By

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

**Research Wednesdays
& Fridays • 1:00-4:00 pm**
**Open for Tours Anytime
by Appointment**

Family History Researchers!



Camwood Genealogy Workshop 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



THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERISM

It comes as no surprise that volunteers are the core of any non-profit organization. That certainly is true of the Stanwood Area Historical Society. Without a dedicated core of people who selflessly offer their time and talents to societies such as ours we cannot succeed.

We sincerely thank all those who have given of themselves to help us keep the doors open at the Historical Society or worked behind the scenes to improve our events and offerings to the greater community. Such altruism, done without seeking any personal or financial gain, is the definition of community service.

There are many excellent non-profits in the Stanwood and Camano area, all doing wonderful work to sustain or advance hope for their fellow residents. Our mission is to preserve the stories of

these people and all who came before.

We do lots of events each year that you might be interested in participating in. On February 22nd and 23rd we will host the Stanwood Camano Snow Goose & Birding Festival. On March 8th we will have our first Sunday afternoon lecture that we are co-hosting with the Stanwood Library. On March 28th we will put on our popular Spring Tea which is our largest fundraiser

Winston Churchill said that, "you make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give." For all those volunteers who find joy in making that life, we say thank you. For anyone seeking that joy in life, please come visit us on Wednesday afternoons between 1:00 and 4:00 and learn more about what we do.

EVENTS @ THE FLOYD

Feb. 22nd • 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Feb. 23rd • 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Stanwood Camano

Snow Goose & Birding Festival

Mar. 8th • 1 p.m.

Sunday Afternoon Discussion

Storm Warning - Historic Weather

Mar. 28th • 12:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Spring Tea &

Vintage Fashion Show

Apr. 26th • 1 p.m.

Sunday Afternoon Discussion

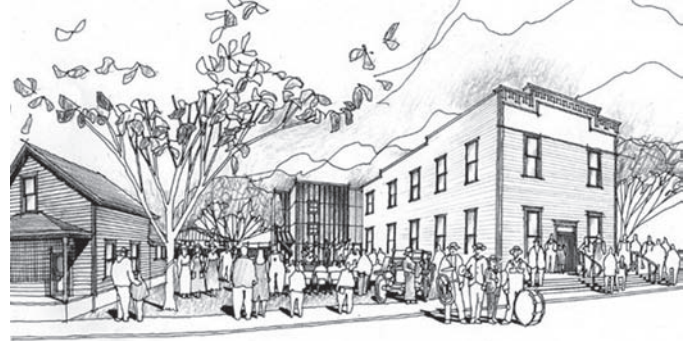
Road To Wounded Knee



"Like" us on

facebook

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, text or call 360-629-2972, email us at sahs.diane@gmail.com or visit us at thefloydnorgaard.weebly.com.

The UPS Store

**Full Color Document Printing • Shipping Service & Supplies
Newsletters • Business Cards • Posters • Brochures**

(360) 629-8100

26910 92nd Ave NW, C5, Stanwood

www.theupsstorelocal.com/4798



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**
- ☐ Family Membership: **\$25.00**
- ☐ Student (Under 15) Membership: **\$5.00**

Name [Please print] _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____



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

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
STANWOOD, WA
PERMIT # 253

STANWOOD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 69
STANWOOD, WA 98292