

# Stanwood Area ECHOES

Newsletter of the Stanwood Area Historical Society  
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Issue No. 88; March, 2026



2017.81.01. Donor unknown, exact date unknown

**The photograph above is of the first Stanwood Fire Department building and its new 1934 "rural" fire truck.**

It is one of the earliest photographs of this two story wooden fire hall we know of. It had folding garage doors with windows and elaborate awnings. The writing on the sign says "This equipment was made possible for your protection by the business firms of East Stanwood and the Farmers Committee." The building was located on 88th Ave NW. To the right of the hall is an apartment building that survives today as of the oldest buildings in the town.

It was in 1965 Thrifty Foods purchased this badly "deteriorated old hall and the lot was added to the Thrifty parking area."

# The History of the Stanwood Fire Department

Excerpted from an article written by Grace Cornwell in 1976 she compiled from Fire Dept minutes.  
Further edits by Allan Anderson and Echoes Editors

After the Great Northern Railroad serving Stanwood came through in 1891, the area around the depot became known as “East Stanwood”. On May 2, 1892 the able townsmen around the waterfront rushed to a fire in a hotel and a bucket brigade was set up from the steamboat moored in the river. *“Five buildings on one side of the street and three buildings on the opposite side were destroyed, together with other small buildings and the Lutheran Church.”* \* There was no official town at the time to establish a fire service.

In another few years, fire again took its toll farther east, causing the area to be called the “Second Burn.” [near what is now known as Cedarhome] No one was near to fight these fires and a scarred area dotted with huge tree stumps destroyed the natural beauty of the greenery for many years. The main street leading east, between Stanwood and East Stanwood, was referred to as “Burnway,” since it was the road leading toward the burned area on the distant hills to the east.

Threats of fire brought the citizens to rally for the need for cleaning up the debris and re-building. The year 1904 was Stanwood’s incorporation on the waterfront but it wasn’t until 1906 the town purchased a hose cart. The vehicle was pulled by two men. Later a horse was purchased to do the job and later still a Model T Ford.

Another fire in 1907 destroyed the home of James Astel, brother of the local newspaper publisher George Astel and the community organized a volunteer fire department. As a result a lot was purchased in 1908 from W. C. Brokaw and H. C. Anderson (local bankers) located in what was called “East Stanwood”. The first fire hall was built in 1909 at the cost of \$888.77. The first chief was W. B. Davis (Stanwood Hardware Store owner) succeeded by Robert Evans (later town marshal) and Sigurd Hall was the secretary.

In 1910 a “Hard Times Ball” was given to raise money for more equipment. Firemen’s hats, coats and equipment were ordered. Practice was weekly - “Monday evenings at 7:15 sharp” and drills were signaled to call firemen with three long and two short rings of the bell repeated four times. A fire alarm was a continuous quick ringing of the fire bell.



From the left is 1955 American LaFrance/5800 Ford, with a 750 pump and 500 gal capacity then a 1934 Ford Rural truck & 1935 Ford City Truck.  
The photograph from the collection owned by Bessie Templeton.

In 1914 a social services need was recognized when Charlie Murphy, a well known town character inspired their sympathy. Charlie had been badly burned in a ship explosion while serving as a merchant seaman. Pain was intolerable and Charlie became addicted to morphine. They took him on as a volunteer for a while.

A petition was voted to bond the town for \$10,000 for purchase of more equipment and improvement of the water mains in 1916 during W.W.I. Fire Department volunteers included Omar Exelby, Peter Arentzen, S. A. Thompson, J. A. Hartney, George Lemon, A. R. Turner, P. D. Wolf and Peter Angell, Martin Tjerne, Jim McFarland, Iver Haugstad, J. W. Hall, Ralph Libby. The department reorganized in 1918 into Company One and Company Two. A carnival was put on and raised \$286.60. They purchased a new truck with a chemical fire extinguisher, a lung motor, another spotlight and State fire insurance. The local telephone company installed a siren alarm at the fire hall. The treasurer reported a balance of \$349.32. It was also voted to pay the doctor bill of Carl Bangs, a butcher at the Palace Market and loyal fireman. He was hurt during a practice drill. Chemical fires were the most frequent conflagrations, as most households still heated and cooked with wood stoves and kerosene.

There were numerous fires at the Clough (later Hamilton) mill and since Mr. Clough ignored the need for a better burner the fire department advised the Washington State Insurance Company of the dangerous condition and the stack

was built in 1923.

In the meantime, dances, “smokers”, and other social events were planned and held to meet the expenses of firefighting. The Town of Stanwood built its 1929 station on the waterfront. It was moved in 1954 to its current location. The building was sold by the city in 2006 and is now a brewpub and restaurant. (See Echoes #31, June 2006)

In order to cut down insurance costs the year 1933 saw the connecting of water mains in Stanwood and East Stanwood (Inc. 1922) . Each town was separately incorporated with great rivalry existing between them. In 1938, the 1920 East Stanwood Commercial Club building burned. It had been a two story building built in 1920. (It was rebuilt and is now the American Legion Building.) In the meantime the Stanwood Fire Department became a member of the Skagit County Fire Association as well as the Washington Fire Association, and the firemen were all insured. The department consisted of 15 dedicated members. In 1935 after purchasing another truck, a new pump was also purchased.

Time passed and but the department was short of members. Around 1941 most locals who were not overseas were working in the mills or the shipping yards building barges on the waterfront. Five men from Camano Island volunteered in this department were Walter Nelson, Bob Moe, Ray Zuppe and Jim Lukehart. Previously the Stanwood Fire Department had aided the citizens of Camano Island in fighting their fires. The Department did not share its latest equipment -- sending only its Model A Ford and its hand hose cart when needed. But Camano Island’s population was increasing and in 1935 Attorney Bailey was engaged to write up a form to be passed to Camano Island’s farmers for their signatures on an insurance rider that would take care of all rural firefighting expenses. The Stanwood Department would be paid \$50 for each service. Five fires were noted: a beach fire at Iverson’s spit, two house fires, a brush fire at Utsalady, a Williams Turkey farm building, and a residence fire at Elger Bay.

In 1952 the Stanwood Fire Department’s new fire chief, Herman Moa suggested the department obtain a map of the town with house number on it to aid in finding fires. They also decided to purchase a new modern fire truck that would cost \$14,000 to be paid in installments. In 1953 new bylaws were adopted and they took on the responsibility of washing down the streets and began conducting first aid classes for the department and the general public. Meanwhile, in 1954 Fire district no. 6 was established for the east side of Camano A contract was drawn up which agreed to furnish fire protection for Dist. 6 at a cost of \$1,546 a year. Dist. 1 (1946) and Dist. 4 (1954) near Madrona had no contract yet. Consolidation of the three districts took place in 1992. This budget was to be raised by taxation.



In 1955 the East Stanwood Fire District no. 14 bought a brand new a 1955 American-LaFrance followed a year later with 1956 model. Later they purchased brand new K196 International, with a 750 gallon pumper that carried 750 gallons of water. The East Stanwood service area was north of the Stillaguamish River, west of Hwy 99, south of the Skagit line including Leque Island (to the border of Island County.)

In 1954 when the Twin City Foods Company wanted to expand, the unusual Spanish Revival or Mission style firehall building was moved from Saratoga Street to its present location at the corner of Oliver (270th St) and Irvine St (102nd Dr). They raised the building two feet from its original proportions and made several unnamed “improvements.” But it was known a new fire hall was needed and ground was broken for a new building in 1958 to include work bench, truck washing facilities, a meeting room, sleeping room and kitchen. It was completed in 1960 the year the towns consolidated. The Fire Departments of the two towns also merged.

Fire department meetings were held at the City Hall. They added an aid car,



a heart machine and answering service. Ray Brandstrom was elected overall chief and was now salaried with an expense allowance. Cliff Larson later became chief and promoted more intensive training and CPR classes as the district expanded. In 1970 a code system was adopted with radio for those who might need a resuscitator. Larson retired in 1976 and succeeded by Richard Hanson followed later by Jerry Hood. In 1966, proceeds purchased two air breathing apparatuses and in 1967 they purchased a Rescue Saw and hydraulic jack from funds raised in a Fireman's Ball, an annual tradition in December.

The Gilbertson Funeral Home at this time operated a new ambulance. In 1976 a new fire alerting system for all districts was established. It was housed in the Gilbertson funeral home across from the fire hall. All calls were received through a centralized unit with special number. An ambulance report was published in the newspaper.

When the 1960 fire station was being planned for remodeling or rebuilding in 2001, soil studies revealed peat moss eight feet down. There was water beginning at 4 ft and gravel formation extending another 52 feet deep. In order to build backfill would be necessary and original soil level raised six to eight feet. The fill would have to be compacted before building project could begin. This building was sold and remodeled in 2004.

The new 2003 fire hall was located south of S. R. 532 and 267th St and Pioneer Highway, a major intersection above the Stillaguamish River flood plain. It is now operated by the North County Regional Fire Authority serving Arlington, Stanwood, Bryant, Freeborn, Grandview, Kackman, Kayak Point, Warm Beach and the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians. It provides Fire/EMS services to 45,000 people over approximately 120 square miles.

The same year the new hall was completed a spectacular fire destroyed the historic 1908 Zion Lutheran church (then the Lighthouse Christian Fellowship), a landmark on the East Stanwood hillside until 2003.

[\*Noted on p. 2 - earliest accounts of 1892 fire: *Whitfield, William. History of Snohomish County, Washington Chicago: Pioneer Historical Pub. Co., 1926, p. 503 & An Illustrated History of Skagit and Snohomish Counties, their people, their commerce and their resources (archive.org) with an outline of the early history of the State of Washington, [s. 1.] Interstate Pub. Co., 1906, p. 350 for comparing accounts]*



## Thank you to the Snow Goose Festival Committee for helping to keep the event alive once again.

This was the 20th year of the Festival (except for COVID). In 2006 in the newly rehabilitated Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center was a gathering place where there were maps, vendors, bird lists, and displays. The first year it was coordinated by Laura Byers, SAHS members and many local nature groups and artists were involved then as now.

The event brought out bird experts and those wishing to bring attention to the amazing Pacific Flyway's Stillaguamish Valley winter avian visitors. Tours that year were of included English Boom, Iverson Spit, Camano Island State Park and events occurred at the Floyd as the hub with vendors and

displays, information booths. Four Springs Forest Preserve on Camano Island had kids activities, more vendors and it hosted the South End String Band and the Crow Island Dixieland Band at Four Springs Preserve evening programs where there were also art exhibits. Kids could build bat houses and bird feeders.

### Committee Members

- Robin & Richard Hanks - Coordinators
- Tom Eisenberg - Friends of Camano Island Parks
- Tom & Shannon Hiegler - Sound Water Stewards
- Gaylen Heacock - Sound Water Stewards
- Scott & Kathleen Chase - Sound Water Stewards, etc.
- Melanie Serroels - Camano Arts Assn & Sound Water Stewards
- Karen Prasse SAHS member, etc.
- Judy Fernandes - SAHS Hall Manager & Graphics support
- Emily Fekkes - Stanwood Camano Arts Advocacy Commission
- Doug Landreth - Photographer
- Betty Dorotik - Camano Arts Assn
- Holly Stafford - Poster Artist

AND the Home Made Healthy Soups and Cookies provided by the Kitchen crew of the Stanwood Area Historical Society, Joan Andrews, Diane Anderson, Karen Pelletier, Rose King, Kris Anderson, Rae Burt, Janet Utgard, Andreena Bergman, Gail Olsen. (Apologies for forgetting some)



# Rent The Floyd

STANWOOD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

perfect for your next:

**Wedding Reception Party**

**Birthday Memorial Gathering**



360-629-6110

fnccmanager@sahs-fncc.org

thefloydnorgaard.org

www.sahs-fncc.org

December, 2025 ~ February, 2026

**Donations In Memory Of**

**Roy Schoenberg** - Kathy Uroff  
**Bill Bachand** - Kathy Uroff  
**Leif Holmes** - Kathy Uroff  
**Bob Nelson** - Hugh Phillips  
**Margaret Utgard (1929-2026)** -  
Rose & Jerry King, Pam Fugier, Anna Skrinde Bowron, Kathy Uroff, Joan Andrews, Jack Freberg, Janet Mayer, Brian & Suzanne Shea, Mary Margaret Haugen, Andrea Xaver, Elizabeth Stewart, Richard & Robin Hanks, Pamela & Tim Adams, Bobbie Eldridge, David & Karen Pelletier, Karen Prasse, Ed & Ramona Snowden, John Smistad, Hugh Phillips, Vivian Henderson, Ken & Barbara Christoferson, Constance Ronning.

*Editors note:* Margaret Utgard's name appeared in this column since 1986 for her contributions in memory of friends and neighbors. She was an early member of the Stanwood Area Historical Society and a source of local history and places. She witnessed and remembered many changes in the community over her 90 years living in East Stanwood. But she would often say to me if I asked her about the waterfront that they never went to that side of town. Her contributions as a registered nurse for over 30 years and volunteer were only a small part of her community contributions but a vital contributor to preserving history in Stanwood.

She collected and sorted clippings and biographical articles for our genealogy collection and recorded her memories last year for a personal account of community history. She was always willing to answer my history questions - Editor

**Stanwood Area Historical Society  
2025 Elected Officers & Trustees**

President ~ Joan Andrews 2025-2026  
Vice President ~ Karen Pelletier 2026-2027  
Treasurer ~ Celia Flones 2026-2027  
Secretary ~ Rose King 2025-2026

Trustees  
2023 - 25 Andreena Bergman  
2024 - 26 Kris Anderson  
2024 - 26 Les Anderson  
2025 - 27 Cliff Larson  
2025 - 27 John Smistad  
2025 - 27 Steve Youngren  
2025 - 27 Janet Utgard  
2025 - 27 John Leque

Honorary Lifetime Trustee :  
Pat Bronson

**SAHS Board Meeting Hours:**

**3rd Thursday of the month, 11 a.m.**

New members and volunteers welcome.

*Officers serve for two year terms.*

*Trustee terms are 3 years*

*President and Secretary rotate on the even year.*

*Vice President and Treasurer rotate on the odd year.*

**Donations: December 2025 - February 2026**

**Ken & Barbara Chistoferson, Camwood  
Genealogy Workshop, Day of Giving**

Welcome to New & Renewed 2026 Members received since December:

Joan Andrews, Jack Freberg, Vicki Lee Rensink, Janet Utgard, Scott Shroyer, Richard and Robin Hanks, Dianne & Dave George, Connie Ronning, Joan McConnell, Charles West, Diane & Les Anderson, Steve Chappel, Dan Royal, Kris & Rick Anderson, Christine Galloway, Andreena Bergman, Emily Harvey, Devon Brewer, Karen Prasse, Jack Archibald.

(Not a complete list if dues were received before Dec. or early March )



**Contact Us!**

You can learn more about activities and events planned for the future in our social media links:

[info@sahs-fncc.org](mailto:info@sahs-fncc.org)

<https://www.sahs-fncc.org/>

<https://thefloydnorgaard.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/StanwoodAreaHistoricalSociety/>

<https://www.instagram.com/sahsfnc/>



Stanwood Area ECHOES is published quarterly by the Stanwood Area Historical Society

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Stanwood, WA 98292

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Editorial Committee: Karen Prasse & Members of the Board

SAHS is a private, non profit organization (501c3). Please help support this publication and other projects and programs with your membership dues, or business sponsorship. Contact us: [info@sahs-fncc.org](mailto:info@sahs-fncc.org)

## Keeping our Museum Open !

Volunteers are vital and welcome to help keep our museum open to the public. Please let us know if you have an interest in actively participating!

Exhibits are open Wednesdays and Saturdays 1—4 pm or by appointment! 360-629-6110

### Volunteers welcome - join us !

We have added new software that will make it easier to communicate to with our members.

Please make sure we have your personal email for notifications

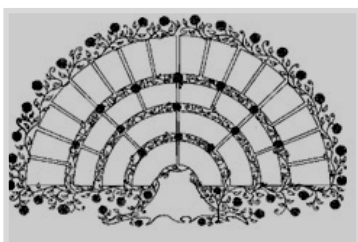
Please send us your current email address to [fnccmanager@sahs-fncc.org](mailto:fnccmanager@sahs-fncc.org)

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## Camwood Genealogy Workshop

CGW meets on the first Mondays of the month in the Eldridge Center at 1 p.m. Contact Bill Blandin

[https://www.sahs-fncc.org/?page\\_id=56](https://www.sahs-fncc.org/?page_id=56)



## Join the Stanwood Area Historical Society

Memberships are due annually in the fall for the following calendar year. This is a significant means of support for the Society and includes a subscription to the newsletter. Check our website for the Form.

Mail to: SAHS P. O. Box 69, Stanwood WA 98292

*SAHS is a tax-exempt non-profit organization and depends for its financial support on gifts, donations, bequests from individuals and groups, fund raising activities and membership dues. Your contributions are tax deductible to you and will be used in support of history education,, preservation projects, collections care, exhibits and programs.*

## Are You Estate Planning?

Please consider remember the Stanwood Area Historical Society (SAHS) in your plans. SAHS is a 501 c3 non profit. We are dedicated to preserving local history and sharing it through events, exhibits and tours. Donations like yours help us keep the doors open so we can share our history with future generations!

## Volunteers pitch in to manage the exhibits and events ~ Thank You!

Many Thanks to the Stillaguamish Valley Museum in Arlington for temporarily storing our historic red sleigh for the coming year. Rose and Jerry King and crew once again load ed the sleigh into their truck to bring it to its temporary storage .

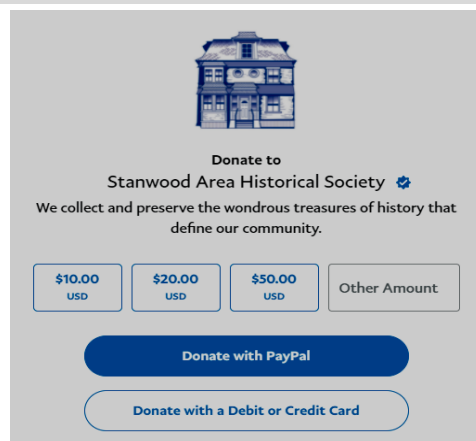
Thanks to the events/exhibits/collections crews (non-board) : Janet Mayer, Janet Larson, Cliff Larson, Dale and Rae Burt, Diane Anderson, Chris Rezendes, Bill Blandin, Pat Bronson, Robin & Richard Hanks, Jerry King, Marvin Fiones, Rick Anderson, Bill Keller, Jim and Barbara Joyce, Jack Freberg, Janet Mayer, Joan McConnell., Laurie Dilday  
(Apologies for forgetting some)

**Many Thanks to the South End String Band** for its lively concert February 8th. And thanks to all the attendees for their “suggested” donations! Most of our events are totally free but contributions for museum collections, publications, and management of our four buildings is always appreciated.

The four members of the band (in the words of the band spokesperson) “were Jim Knighton playing his homemade mandolin. Erich Schweiger who made his fiddle too from scratch and now new ukelele and provided an adapted version of “You are my Sunshine”. Jim Karr could have gone out and bought an expensive standup bass but no, he went down to Toys R Us and bought his rubber band bass for basically nothing. He even found the case for it on the highway, free. Jack Archibald played the banjo he bought “second hand cheap in 1980” but he also made his own that gets used on occasion as well.

The band has played for SAHS since 2004 in the SAHS concert series and has had up to 12 members at various times. Thank you!

Paypal link is on our website sidebar [www.sahs-fncc.org](http://www.sahs-fncc.org)  
Credit cards can be used on this website.





2025 Sponsors - New 2026 Sponsorships are welcome!

Current Exhibits in the Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center, the D. O. Pearson House and Eldridge Center

**FNCC Third Floor Exhibits:**

- Bunads of Local Norwegian Heritage Families
- Fallen Heroes of our Armed Forces and Red Cross Nurses remembered through their uniforms and soldier stories.
- Once a Milltown – Logging and Lumbering - *update in progress*

- Consolidation of the "Twin Cities" and their schools
- Dollhouses and Miniature & Early Church Models
- "Trees to Peas to Prosperity"
- Dr. Mac – First medical man in Stanwood
- Stanwood Klondikers of 1898

**Eldridge Center Exhibits:**

- Aerial Photographs of Stanwood and the Stillaguamish Valley
- Stanwood High School Class Picture Gallery
- Pearson House Museum**  
Three story home of First Mayor of Stanwood built in 1891

**Memorial Day**

SAHS Veterans Memorial Committee will participate with the American Legion Post #92 at Anderson Cemetery this year and we will put flags up on veteran's graves at Camano Lutheran and Camano Pioneer Cemetery.

We will also have a table at the inaugural ceremony of the OCS of Northwest Washington on Saturday, May 30, 2026 at Stanwood-Camano High School's Performing Arts Center. This is the Annual High School Enlistee Recognition Ceremony to honor its Class of 2026 high school seniors from all over the Pacific Northwest who are entering military service and their families. To register to attend please go to this website:

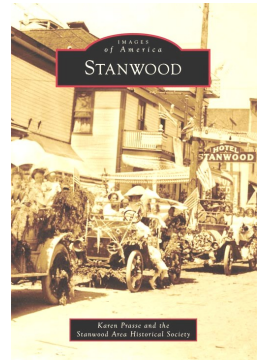
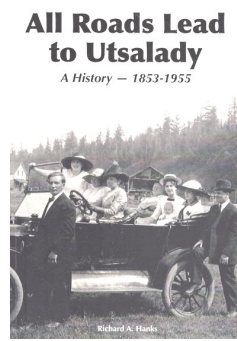
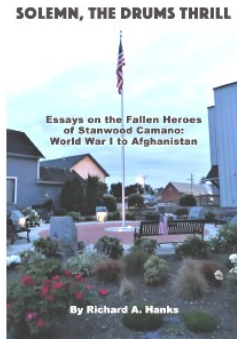
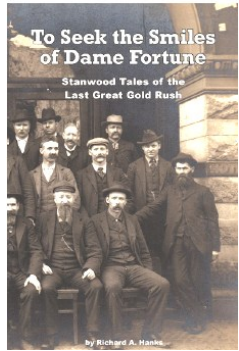
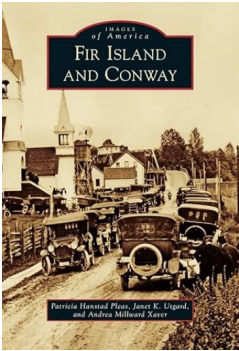
<https://community.ocsusa.org/northwest-washington/>

Veterans Memorial Bricks : We have limited space available on the wall to honor your veteran with a memorial brick and we will be doing a Spring engraving soon. Thanks to some generous donors we are in the process of expanding our available bricks by building short walls within the garden for future engravings.



# SAHS Events for 2026 ~ Mark your calendars and check back for more!

- April, 25th                    **Spring Tea** ~ Saturday April 25th, Tickets available April 1.
- 4th of July                    **Fourth of July Parade & Ice Cream Social** - Parade begins at 11 a.m.
- September 12th            **Home & Historic Buildings Tour** - Details to be announced soon.
- November 8th              History Lecture Series: **“Fire on the Flood Tide, How Events of the Early 1800s affected the Stanwood Area”** The program will feature his discoveries of incredible events buried in the historical record for over 200 years.  
Speaker: Tug Buse ~ Historian  
*4 pm Sunday afternoon.*



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