

Stanwood Area ECHOES

Newsletter of the
Stanwood Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 69
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Stanwood, Washington 98292



Issue 31, June, 2006

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Meetings are the 4th Thursdays
(January—October) 7:30 p.m. at the
Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center.

- June 22— Short business meeting to discuss Fourth of July activities followed by a mini concert by pianist, Janet Schweiger, who will perform on the 1895 Steinway Grand Piano donated to the Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center through the Laurie Z Estate.



4th of July Parade &
Ice Cream Social See p 7.

Concerts at the Floyd 2006-2007

- Oct. 8, 2006 ~ **Ventidita**—Lisa Bergman & Deborah Dewey, Pianists
- November 12, 2006 ~ **Owen Emlen, Cellist & Andrea Rose, Piano**
- December 10, 2006 ~ **Rossini Winds**, Woodwind Quartet
- January 14, 2007 ~ **Cohan/Shangrow Duo**—Jeffrey Cohan, Flute & George Shangrow, Piano.

Sundays 2 p.m.
Tickets available at the door
or at Snow Goose Bookstore



Stanwood Volunteer Fire Station, circa 1929. Above is Stanwood's 1929 Fire Station that still stands in the west end of Stanwood on the opposite corner from the City Hall. This photograph shows the building in its original location on the property where the Twin City Foods freezing plant now stands. The building & property is owned by the City of Stanwood and is for sale. The City has expressed a wish that the purchaser preserve this historic building if possible.

To preserve or not to preserve— Stanwood's Historic Fire Station

By Karen Prasse

By 1929, fifty years after the first Stanwood store was built on the mouth of the Stillaguamish River, the town had suffered several serious fires. The most notable was in 1892 when thirteen buildings along the waterfront were destroyed. In 1907, when prominent citizen George Astel's home burned, the volunteers were organized. Two years later built their first fire station. In 1920 another devastating fire burned the homes of Fred Pearson (D. O. Pearson's son) and Albert Court on Lindsay Street and threatened the Stanwood Lumber Company mill nearby. The winds carried smoke and embers threatening the business district - what is now west Stanwood near the Stanwood Hotel. More houses would have been damaged if volunteers from the mill, businessmen from East



Northeast corner of Irvine St.(270th Ave.) & Oliver Street (102nd Drive) intersection with the City storage building, the historic fire station, former doctor's office and current pawn shop on the right, 2006.

East Stanwood and residents from surrounding homes hadn't been there to help. Fred Pearson (son of D. O. Pearson, Stanwood's first mayor) was City Clerk and some of the city's council minutes and warrants from the previous fall were destroyed in that fire.

In February of 1929, the beginning of the Great Depression, the city fathers of Stanwood were struggling to raise \$2500 for a larger new fire station—a "building suitable for the demands of the fire department and a credit to the town." They decided to build a station that would be constructed of concrete on the lower section with an upper story of wood walls and stucco. The building would be 60 feet long and 22 feet wide with sleeping quarters for two men, a large meeting or banquet room and kitchen facilities. The lower floor would house the trucks and pumping equipment. They were careful that "all possible means of raising money will be used to pay for the building so as to make it as little a burden on the city as possible."

The businessmen of the town were urged to volunteer to help carpenters Peter Bransmo and Ole Vatne build the building and many did. They also held numerous fund-raising benefit shows including a fireman's ball in the IOOF Hall. In October of 1929, they held a banquet to officially accept their new building that had an 18 foot "slick brass sliding pole" that was customary in fire stations of the day. In the article on the banquet they were equally proud of their handmade portable pump truck that took 500 hours to construct

In 1954 when the Twin City Foods Company wanted to expand, the unusual Spanish Revival or Mission style 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."

The fire departments of Stanwood and East Stanwood were separate entities until 1960 when the towns merged. Ray Brandstrom became the new chief of both stations. But it was

not economical to maintain two stations so eventually the Stanwood volunteers retired or joined what was becoming the main station in East Stanwood. The Stanwood volunteers disbanded and meetings and training took place in the new "East" Stanwood station that only recently has itself been replaced.

The architecture of the 1929 station is unique and possibly the only Spanish Revival style fire station in the State of Washington. Other Spanish revival buildings in the area include the American Legion Hall built in 1940 and Arlington's old Methodist Episcopal church at the north end of Olympic Avenue. In the series of newspaper articles describing the planning and construction, there was no mention of a specific architect or designer of the building. (Does anyone know more? Call us 360-629-6110)

The City of Stanwood currently owns the building and has decided to sell it as surplus property. They would like to see the historic character of the building preserved but the costs of such a restoration and extent of damage (particularly from the most recent earthquake) have not been determined. And the definition of preserving the historic character is not clear. It is zoned "Main street Business I" and might be a logical place for a restaurant or office. If it is possible to preserve and/or replicate the façade and main structure, an owner could build off the back for additional modern enhancements and space requirements and improvements as was done with the Stanwood Former Public Hall (now Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center.)

We appreciate the City's recognition of this historic place. It is to every community's benefit to respect and preserve the unique character of this local historical buildings whenever possible. This helps maintain a sense of identity along with upgrading its usefulness to the community either as a commercial or public downtown space. Recycling and re-using whenever possible is a prudent and worthy goal, and may be a good choice in this case also.