

STEILACOOM HISTORICAL



MUSEUM QUARTERLY

Volume 24, Number 1

Spring, 1995

Our 25th Anniversary

This issue celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association. It all began in 1970 when Mayor George Salzer and Town Councilman Clyde Davidson organized a committee to establish the Association and to start a small museum in the basement of the Town Hall. The other committee members were Lee Merrill, Herb Hunt, Eudocia Leech, Clenda Davidson, Leland Anthow, and Alice Henly.

The project started with \$609.03 and was later described by Lee Merrill as follows:

Certainly no one had ever seen \$609.03 stretched so far. The dollar interest slowed to a trickle, but became a flood of human interest in every conceivable category from pie bakers to carpenters, gardeners, telephone callers, docents, editors, artists,

(Continued on page 2)

The Steilacoom Historical Museum Quarterly is issued as the official publication of the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association. Mail correspondence to the Editor, Box 88016, Steilacoom, WA 98388. Telephone: (206) 584-4133

Joan Curtis, Bette Bradley—Editors

Wolf Fletter.....President Wolf Fletter.....Treasurer
Jeanne BirneySecretary Arline BrightmanInterim Director
Arline BrightmanPast President
Trustees: Marilyn Cullen, Dave Hudson, Jane Light, Sandra Menter-Berry,
H. L. Shellabarger, Sandy Strother, David Welch, Doug Wing

Front page photo: Clyde Davidson, president, addresses the first annual meeting of the Steilacoom Museum Association in 1970.

25th Anniversary

(continued from page 1)

scroungers of all kinds for nails, tents, old cider presses, clams, to U.S. Air Force engineers and their heavy equipment. You name it!

This description of the Association is still true today. Its strength lies in the willingness of the membership to donate their time and talent. 1995 is the year we celebrate our commitment to preserving Steilacoom's past for future generations.

President's Letter

At your Association's annual meeting in December, 1994, Dave Hopkins and Don Yoder shared the Long Range Planning Task Force's vision of the future for SHMA. I promised that your Board would address the challenges inherent to the visions, and I am taking this opportunity to give a status report.

First, I asked our editor, Bette Bradley, to provide a synopsis of task force's survey results and some statistics. This is the data that the SHMA Board considered as it began review of the report. It is important that the membership understands this data and its implications.

Second, the Board knows the danger in remaining inflexible to changes in the operating environment. Doing so has the consequence of making SHMA not relevant, ineffective and could cause it to wither. The fact is that the Association is beginning to see the fruit of seeds that were sown over five years ago.

What is new is having a vision expressed as eloquently and uniquely as the task force did. After intense review and David Hopkins' insightful comments, the Board was able to internalize the clarity of vision in the two "time" capsulated snapshots of "what it could be like" in five and ten years in the future. Dave helped the board see how these snapshots give the general flavor, the feel, and direction, rather than the specifics of any particular item seen in the "snapshots." This let the Board focus on the vision inherent in the report and allowed us to deal wisely with its proposals. While not all proposals outlined in the two snapshots have met with unanimous endorsement, you should know none has been discarded either. On the whole, the concepts expressed by the task force have been received very favorably and certainly have helped the board focus. Thus, and on behalf of the Board, I would like to publicly express my deep appreciation to the wonderful product presented to the board, the Association, and the community.

We have decided on our mission. We made a subtle shift from the "museum" focus of the last 25 years to a more inclusive mission. The SHMA mission now is:

The SHMA shall seek to preserve and maintain cultural values, educational opportunities, architecture, and landmarks that form the historical heritage in the Town of Steilacoom for present and future generations. The mission will be insured through:

- Offering events which celebrate Steilacoom's characteristics and promote a sense of community.
- Educating the public about the town's historical significance.
- Maintaining and operating a museum to include storage, displays, and deaccessions.
- Promoting fiscal self-sufficiency.

The Board also agreed with the task force recommendation of more structured roles for Board members and more involvement by the membership.

After analysis, functional groupings of activities and Board "lead" positions were established. As our experience increases, these positions are intended to become permanently established with defined responsibilities. For this year "lead" role means that the designated Board member will assure that appropriate Association members are involved and organized to achieve desired goals and objectives. In effect, those accepting a "lead" role are holding themselves accountable to the rest of the Board for accomplishment of the responsibilities that the Board itself assigned to the positions.

Planning for this year's activities

In addition to the above, I'm very pleased to report that Board members "Shelly" Shellabarger, Sandra Mentor-Berry, and Doug Wing have each accepted "lead" roles for this year's Salmon Bake, Apple Squeeze, and Annual Christmas meeting, respectively. Also, Dave Welsh will, by the time this reaches everyone, have submitted our second federal grant request. In addition to the traditional operating grant that we apply for, SHMA applied for a conservation grant for the Orr Home Foundation. Your Board approved to match the federal funding requirement in the event SHMA wins this grant. Your Board also approved Jane Light's motion to formally establish an endowment fund. To support this effort, Shelly Shellabarger will explore formalities of doing this from the investment side while I have asked our Acting Director, Arline Brightman, to provide research as to any legal requirements and obligations by the Association. Finally, the Board reached consensus at its last meeting that it supports "the Bair" operating as a restaurant in the style it is today. The board also supports the notion that it ought to be profitable to do so. This does put SHMA at a crossroads—do we keep the lot next door free for the future or do an "interior fix" with the proposed storage area.

I am very enthused and encouraged by the support your Board has given the initiatives that resulted from the task

force's report. I feel we are recharged, have clear vision of where we want to go, and are on a solid basis for obtaining the resources needed. Of course, it's not all done. We still will need more work in finding out just exactly who we are serving and what values of theirs we are interested in preserving and how we want to do all this. Nevertheless, the Board has a clear vision of what it is, where it wants to be, and is committed to a process of getting there. It is dynamic, alive, vibrant, and exciting to be associated with. Please join us and make the entire organization become a reflection of the great things it can be for our community and our future generations.

Wolf Fletter

Synopsis of the Survey Results

The December issue of the *Quarterly* listed seven of the most important preferences give by those who responded to the long range planning questionnaire. This issue highlights some conclusions that can be drawn from the survey. There was about a 30% return rate, normal for surveys, and the general response was positive with no harsh criticisms, but many worthwhile comments.

One obvious fact stands out clearly: the central core of our membership consists of those who live in or near Steilacoom and are Life members. Consider these statistics: of the 415 members, 281 (68%) are Life members. Of those, 194, more that two-thirds, live in the local area. Adding in age as a factor, half of the respondees were 60 years or older, with about 40% between 40-60 years of age. When the number of Life members and the age of the respondees are considered, it is clear that the Association has an aging membership. These same responders have been the backbone of support for the Association.

It is not fair to ask this group to continue to carry the load they have in the past. We have to look to new members who can energize the Association with good ideas for the future.

Two dominant long-range goals emerged from the questionnaire: a conservative financial strategy and an emphasis on increasing the number and involvement of members.

Conservatism was not the note sounded, however, when respondees expressed the *value* they place on different purposes of the Association. There was a clear cut preference for going beyond an organization whose main purpose was to operate a museum and conduct fund raising events. More emphasis was placed on expanding the role of the Association to become involved in the community and to educate people about Steilacoom's historical significance. As a matter of fact, maintaining the status quo was given a low priority. Wolf Fletter has commented on the Board response to this challenge in the President's Letter.

Salmagundi

- ★ The Association wishes to thank Kay and Richard Flynn for their generous donation. It paid for the concrete base of the brick walkway at the Wagon Shop. Ken Fellows, assisted by Gary Wilkes, will lay the bricks.
- ★ The Museum is open Tuesdays through Sunday, 1-4 p.m., until fall. The Orr Home will be open April 23 through September on Saturdays and Sundays, 1-4 p.m.
- ★ We need members and friends of SHMA to march in the 4th of July parade. We want to wear period costumes or clothing. If you're interested, please call Sandra Menter-Berry at 581-5532.
- ★ Apple Crafters - If you are interested in making and donating original "apple" crafts for SHMA to sell at the Apple Squeeze, please call Sandra Menter-Berry at 581-5532.

Calendar of Events

Spring Clean Up at the Orr Orchard.....	April 21-22
Bair Store 100-year Celebration	May 6 and 20
Ice Cream Social and Art Show	June 25
Salmon Bake.....	August 20
Apple Squeeze	October 15
Annual Christmas Dinner and Membership Meeting	Dec. 2

Farewell to Steilacoom Lodge #2

Steilacoom Masonic Lodge #2, after 140 years, has left the town of Steilacoom. The fraternal order, which had survived depletions in membership from the Fraser Gold Rush, the Indian Wars, the move of the county seat to Tacoma, wars and depressions, has moved to University Place to lease space from the Horace B. Tyler Lodge #290. Continued operational and maintenance expenses and increasing property taxes were among the reasons for leaving the aging Lodge building, according to Stan Cybulski, treasurer.

Only four years after Lafayette Balch dropped anchor to establish the Town of Steilacoom, a group of Master Masons met on January 19, 1854, to draw up a petition. It was addressed to the Most Worshipful Master of Oregon requesting permission to organize a lodge. The charter was issued June 13, 1854.

The seven founders were prominent men of the time. They included Lafayette Balch; John M. Chapman, who with his father had platted Steilacoom City adjacent to Balch's town, and William Wallace, governor of Washington and Idaho territories and delegate to Congress. The membership rolls of the Lodge would continue to read like an early day Who's Who of Steilacoom and Pierce County, even though the membership was less than thirty until 1870.

In 1858 the four Lodges north of the Columbia River decided to form their own Grand Lodge of Washington. They were numbered according to the dates of their individual charters, with Olympia No. 1 and Steilacoom No. 2. According to *History of Steilacoom Lodge No. 2 F. & A.M. 1854-1952* by Christian A. Spreen:

At first the Lodge met in a hall located at the corner of Balch and Starling streets. By 1860 the Lodge was prosperous enough that it was decided to build a temple. Plans were drawn by Allen Miller of Puyallup, and the money advanced by Charles Wren (3/7) and Sam McCaw and Rogers (4/7). They chose a site on Commercial Street at the northwest corner of Wilkes. The hall was dedicated July 4, 1861.

(Continued on page 10)

Founders of Steilacoom Histori



Clenda Davidson

Acknowledged historian of Steilacoom; keeper of records and artifacts. Granddaughter of William M. Clendenin, early Steilacoom merchant.



Clyde Davidson

Member of Town Council. Key promoter and first president of Steilacoom Historical Museum Association. Restored his 1858 home "Rolling Hill."



Eudocia Bair Leech

Steilacoom native; postmistress. She and her brother "Cub" gave the Bair Store and adjacent lot to the Association in memory of their parents, Hattie and W. L. Bair.



George Salzer

Steilacoom native; popular mayor for three terms. Supported the founding of Steilacoom Historical Museum Association and endorsed town space for the museum.

al Museum Association—1970



Alice Henly

Steilacoom native; member of pioneer family that came to Steilacoom in 1849. Father, Neil Henly, was a member of the Town Council and Town Marshal.



Lee Merrill

Father of the Daffodil Festival. Professional photographer. Second president of Steilacoom Historical Museum Association.



Herb Hunt

Retired banker. Co-promoter with Clyde Davidson to establish Steilacoom Historical Museum Association. Son of Herbert Hunt who wrote *History of Tacoma*.



Leland Athow

President of Pierce County Pioneer Association. Great grandson of Adam and Mary Byrd who arrived with the first wagon train in 1853. Historian for the Byrd clan and publisher of a genealogy of the descendants of Adam Byrd.



Ladies gather for a picture in front of the Steilacoom Mason Lodge No. 2 in the early 1900s.

Financial difficulties in succeeding years caused the Lodge to be unable to meet the payments on their hall, so they moved back to the original hall at Balch and Starling streets, which was owned by McLucas and Allen. In 1868 this building burned.

The *Olympia Transcript*, May 16, 1868, published the following account:

“FIRE AT STEILACOOM—The Masonic Hall Building at Steilacoom was burned at 2:00 last Sunday morning, with all its contents, containing the library, regalia and furniture of the Lodge. The loss is estimated at \$1,400. The cause of the fire is not positively known, but supposed to be accidental and from a cigar left by a member who was in the Lodge room the day before.”

The Good Templars Lodge, which met on the second floor of the W. H. Wallace Building, offered them the use of their hall. This building stood on the corner of Wilkes and Commercial streets, where the E. R. Rogers stands today. In 1872 the Lodge moved into the temple it had built eleven years before. By 1874 the Lodge was able to buy $\frac{3}{7}$ interest in the hall, while it continued to share it with McCaw and Rogers who owned the remaining $\frac{4}{7}$ interest. This was not a satisfactory arrangement, as there were disagreements on the need for repairs and rentals. However, the combined ownership continued until a court auction on the building and property occurred on May 31, 1894. The Lodge accepted the bid of

\$460.00 with John Saltar loaning the amount required for the first payment. At this time the membership numbered only thirty and the entire country was in the throes of "The Panic of '93."

Steilacoom's only cemetery was purchased by the Masons in 1883 for \$55 from Emma and Nathaniel Orr. The eleven acres adjoining Fort Lewis was surveyed, laid out in blocks, and fenced by the membership. Sadly, John Saltar, a member of the Masonic Burying Ground Committee, would bury his daughter, Margaret, nine months later—the first to be interred in the new cemetery.

In 1888 the Lodge became a "Moon lodge," with meetings held on or before the full moon, enabling members "to travel to and from the Lodge in greater safety and convenience by the light of the full moon over uncertain roads." Presently the Lodge holds its monthly meetings on the Friday preceding the full moon.

According to Spreen's history:

By 1906 the Northern Pacific Railroad began negotiating with owners of property in Steilacoom for a right-of-way for their water level route. In April of that year the Lodge received an offer of \$7.50 per lot from the railroad. The Lodge voted to offer the property for \$6,000.

On July 2, 1909, the Lodge purchased a lot for a new building on Lafayette Street. Later that year they voted that "the N.P.R.R. be notified that the Lodge property would not be for sale until actually needed by the railroad for road purposes and that the price, if taken in the next twelve months, would be \$10,000. Also that the price would be raised later."

Evidently an astute member had realized that the economy has improved in the three years and that a bargain could be struck. The offer was accepted.

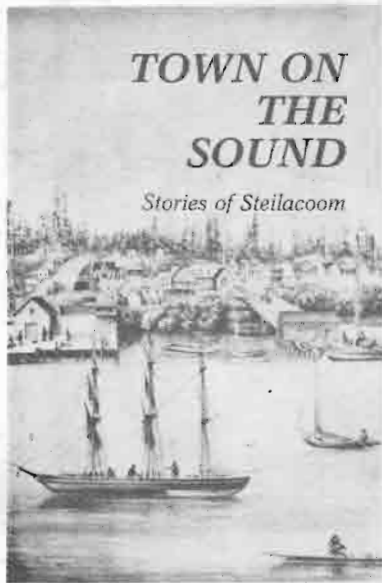
Arrangements proceeded in a timely manner. The RR completed the sale and the money was received in February, 1910. Nick Doering was given permission to move the old building to his property on Lafayette Street where it contained a variety of businesses until it burned in 1939.

TOWN ON THE SOUND

Third printing!

Available at the Bair Store and the Museum

\$14.⁰⁰



Steilacoom Historical
Museum Association
P.O. Box 88016
Steilacoom, WA 98388

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Tacoma, WA
Permit No. 272

Address Correction Requested

Jane & Weldon Rau
3035 Edgewood Dr. S.E.
Olympia WA 98501