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THE  
CLAYTON/DEER PARK  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Mortarboard

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## LUMBER SAWMILLS IN THE DEER PARK, WASHINGTON AREA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY 1890 TO 1920

By: Peter Coffin

### INTRODUCTION:

With the influx of settlers into northeastern Washington in the late 1880s came the need to build housing and clear the land for farming. Many smaller, portable saw mills were freighted in from the east and erected on various individual farms to mill the timber cut down from land clearing to mill into lumber for houses, barns, and town buildings. Spokane Falls had such an early water powered saw mill (Youngs, 1996, p.7). Just prior to the construction of the Spokane Falls and Northern Railroad in 1889, it was reported that at least fifteen sawmills were to be found between Spokane Falls and the site of the future Deer Park.

Records of these saw mills are not readily available and may be lost. A diary kept by Williams Valley resident Herbert Mason in the period from 1906 to early 1909 mentions hauling logs to the following saw mills in the Deer Park area: Orr's Mill, Holden's Mill, Hutchins's Mill, Haskin Company's Mill, Gemmill's Mill, Michael's Tie Mill, and the Standard Lumber Company's Deer Park Mill. The precise location of all but two of these mills is uncertain. Both the Gemmill

Mill and the Standard Lumber Company Mill were substantial operations.

### LOUIS C. GEMMILL'S MILL

Louis C. Gemmill and James Evans were the first settlers in the Deer Park area in 1883 (Fisher et al, 1970, p. 4.). Gemmill operated a lumber saw mill along the south bank of Dragoon Creek about five miles south of Deer Park in Section 35-T28N-R42E near just east of the intersection of Dalton Road and



Figure 1: The Gemmill Mill and lumber yard on the banks of Dragoon Creek around 1899 to 1901. The water flume is seen in the middle of the picture. The man in the horse drawn hack is Louis Gemmill. (Photograph from the Lawrence Zimmerer Collection)

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**Figure 2: The upstream corner of the Gemmill Mill and the flood damage that washed away the flume. Dragoon Creek still looks to be in flood! (Photograph from the Lawrence Zimmerer Collection)**

citizen Benjamin Lewis, Evan Enoch, along with Short family members B. A. Hopkins, F. A. Reed Mrs. S. R. Short and Mrs. E. A. Reed being part of the company. In 1892 the partnership consolidated with Ashenfelter and Borline, a Spokane firm and incorporated as the Washington Mill Company with W. H. Short as president. A deal was made whereby The Spokane Falls and Northern Railroad would sell timber to Short and Crawford and their mill would supply lumber to the Washington Mill Company (Short, 1971, p.4). The new mill soon became the largest saw mill in the area and was soon on a railroad siding for easy shipment of the lumber to market. The mill was first located north and west of the intersection of Crawford and the railroad right-of-way (the present BNSF railroad tracks), due west of the present Deer Park Congre-

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Dragoon Creek. A large flume carried Dragoon Creek water onto a water wheel to power the mill.

A flood washed out the flume and damaged the mill which was sold and moved to Camden. Later, the mill was moved to Montana.

### **THE FIRST STANDARD LUMBER COMPANY MILL**

William Hopkins Short and his brother-in-law George Crawford rented a small portable saw mill and moved it to the Deer Park area early in 1890 (Short, 1971, p. 4). According to a 1914 Deer Park Union newspaper article they later purchased the portable mill from Hawley and Glass. They

formed the firm of Short and Crawford with local



**Figure 3: Standard Lumber Company Mill (the "old mill"?) about 1900. This picture was taken from the top of a pile of drying lumber and the relatively new Congregational Church is just to the right of the main mill building. (Photograph from the Lawrence Zimmerer Collection)**

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**Figure 4: Inside the first Standard Lumber Mill Company's mill. Note that the mill is composed of two large circular saw blades set one above the other. The sawyer stands to the right and the setter rides the carriage back and forth in front of the saws. The building is constructed of wooden timbers.**

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gational Church and just north of the old Deer Park Creamery buildings.

Later in 1892, Short and Crawford built a new mill with a capacity to cut 20,000 board feet of lumber per day and added a planer and a lath mill. This operation continued until 1899 when the Deer Park stockholders left the Washington Mill Company and formed the Standard Lumber Company. In 1902, the mill burned and was rebuilt with the addition of the Pine Lumber Company factory and the timber holdings. This became known as the "old mill".

Logs from the surrounding area were hauled to the mill by horse drawn wagons and sleds (in the winter) and by an experimental steam traction engine pulling "cars" or three wheeled wagons. The steam traction engine experiment was essentially a failure and was discarded after three or four years of use (Short, 1917, p.48-49). It was neither efficient nor economical being used in the summer only as it would be stuck in the mud in winter.

This mill was damaged by fire again in 1903 and rebuilt with a different hood over the sawdust/scraps



**Figure 5: "Old Buck," the steam traction engine and loaded wagons on a dry road. The horse teams would skid the logs to a landing where they could be loaded on the wagons. (Photograph from the Lawrence Zimmerer Collection)**

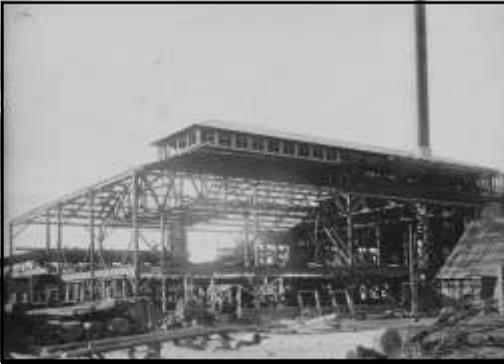
burner that was not flammable (Short, 1971, p 32-33).

## **THE SECOND STANDARD LUMBER COMPANY MILL**

In 1909, the dam on Dragoon Creek was completed which impounded water for the Arcadia Orchard's Low Line Canal. Short purchased the nearby land and constructed a new mill utilizing the irrigation reservoir as a mill pond. This mill was a substantial project and included much state of the industry machinery to mill the logs, dry the wet lumber, finish the dry lumber as well as the beginnings of a box factory. A six mile long railroad (the Deer Park Central Railroad) was constructed north toward Garden Spot to haul logs from timber lands owned by William Short.

The "new" Standard Lumber Company mill was a substantial building framed with steel girders and faced with brick. Interestingly, the brick was made from a clay pit one fourth mile north of the mill site according to Mr. Short's son who worked during summers with the crew making the bricks (Short, 1971, p.51-52).

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**Figure 6: The "new" Standard Lumber Company saw mill shortly before 1914 and its sale to the Leuthold-Wilson group. (Photograph courtesy of the Deer Park Open Door Congregational Church)**



**Figure 7: The Clark Brothers' band saw mill in action with the sawyer in the light colored shirt and the setters riding the carriage. (Photograph courtesy of the Deer Park Open Door Congregational Church)**

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Inside the mill a large Clark Brothers' band saw mill was capable of cutting logs of diameters approaching five feet.

Behind the band saw were the Diamond edger and a large gang saw. The edger trimmed the edges of the lumber slabs and the gang saw milled large



**Figure 8: The Diamond edger is on the left and the gang saw is on the right. In the right foreground a rough board and a cant are on the chain coming from the band saw. (Photograph courtesy of the Deer Park Open Door Congregational Church)**

cants into raw lumber while the band saw trimmed up a new cant.

Mill waste was burned in Wickes Brothers' boilers to produce steam to run a General Electric Turbine which provided the electricity to run the entire mill.

## CONCLUSION

In 1914, William Hopkins Short sold the Standard Lumber Company operation to William M. Leuthold and R. L. Wilson for about \$500,000. At that time the operation consisted of the mill, a lumber planing mill, about 13,000 acres of timber and the Deer Park Central Railroad. The operation was re-organized as the Deer Park Lumber Company and provided a living for several hundred saw mill workers from then until being shut down in 1972.

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**Figure 9:** The cylindrical brick Wickes Brothers' boilers behind the scrap conveyor in the foreground feeding the furnace. (Photograph courtesy of the Deer Park Open Door Congregational Church)

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**Figure 10:** The General Electric Turbine on the left and the electric control panel on the right. Note the clean well kept appearance of the room and the brick walls. (Photograph courtesy of the Deer Park Open Door Congregational Church)



**Figure 11:** The Mareen-Johnson box board factory portion of the mill. (Photograph courtesy of the Deer Park Open Door Congregational Church)

- Short, W. H., 1970, From Whence We Came: Deer Park, Washington(?), Congregational Church Manuscript, 66 p.
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## THE DEER PARK CENTRAL RAILROAD

By: Michael Denuty

### ORIGINS OF THE RAILROAD

The Deer Park Central Railroad was planned and built between 1911 and 1913 by the Standard Lumber Company to haul logs from the white pine forests north of Deer Park to the sawmill at Deer Park (Short, 1972, p.53-54). This company began as a partnership between William Hopkins Short and his brother-in-law George Crawford in 1889. Short and Crawford had rented a small portable sawmill and after a year of operation purchased a new mill. In February of 1892 Short and Crawford, along with the Ashenfelter-Borline-Acuff partnership, formed the Washington Mill Company which purchased the lumber milled at the Deer Park saw mill. In 1899 this partnership was dissolved and Short organized the Standard Lumber Company. George Crawford had moved to Minnesota shortly after his wife died in 1892.

The Standard Lumber Company mill burned in 1902 and 1903 and was rebuilt, each time becoming larger with more equipment. In 1909 a new mill was built about one half mile northwest of the old mill near the Arcadia Orchards Company's low line canal reservoir on Dragoon Creek. The irrigation

reservoir became the mill's log pond. The new mill included a steel-framed, brick faced sawmill containing a planer and box factory.

Originally, timber was cut around Deer Park for construction lumber and railroad ties and the land converted to commercial or residential uses as well as farm land. As logging moved farther from the sawmill, transportation of the logs became an issue. About 1907, a large 3-wheel steam traction engine, known as "Old Buck", was purchased to haul log carts from the woods to the mill. The engine really only functioned in the summer months and didn't work well in the wet woods, needing a specially constructed roadway. "Old Buck" was costly and inefficient and in 1909 or 1910 Short decided that the solution to the log hauling operations was a railroad and construction of a standard gauge line began (Short, 1971, p.52).

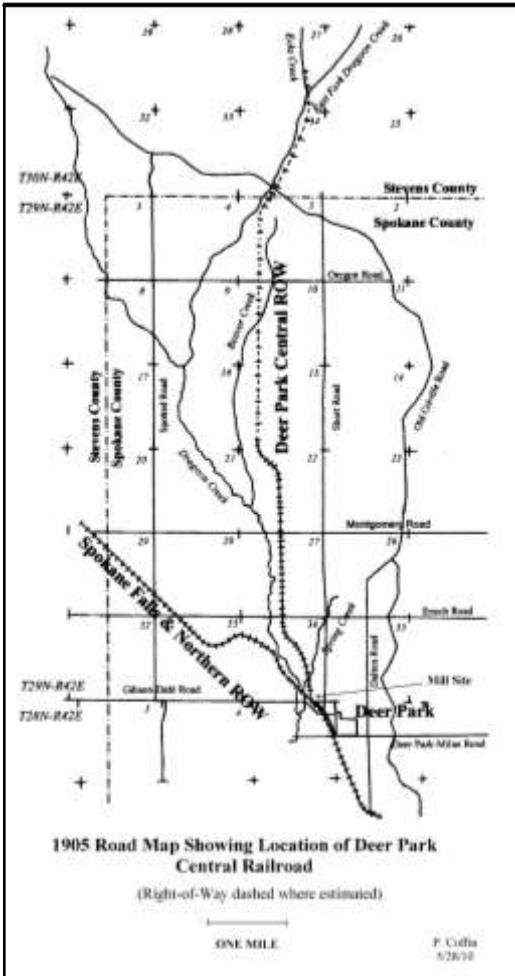
### RAILROAD TRACK LOCATION

The railroad that Short built was called the Deer Park Central Railroad and the right of way headed generally north from the new mill site on the Dragoon Creek mill pond. Approximately 7 miles of mainline rails ran somewhat parallel with Dragoon Creek, Beaver Creek and the East Fork of Dragoon Creek into Stevens County and along Ecks Creek into the area of the old Garden Spot Ranch. The rails passed northward crossing the west end of the present day Enoch Road, crossed Mont-



Figure 1: "Old Buck" in the forest with trailers loaded with logs.

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**Figure 2:** The location of the Deer Park Central Railroad drawn on a 1905 road map. The railroad right-of-way north from Deer Park to Section 22 was copied from the 1930 Metsker atlas ownership map of T29N-R42E. North from section 22 the dashed railroad route follows long narrow strips of land recorded on the Spokane County Assessor's land ownership map. North across the county line the route is my best estimation based on the valley topography.

gomery Road just east of Dragoon Creek and crossed the old Colville Road (Cottonwood Road) about a half mile west of the Garden Spot Grange Hall, Short Road and the Spokane County/Stevens County line.



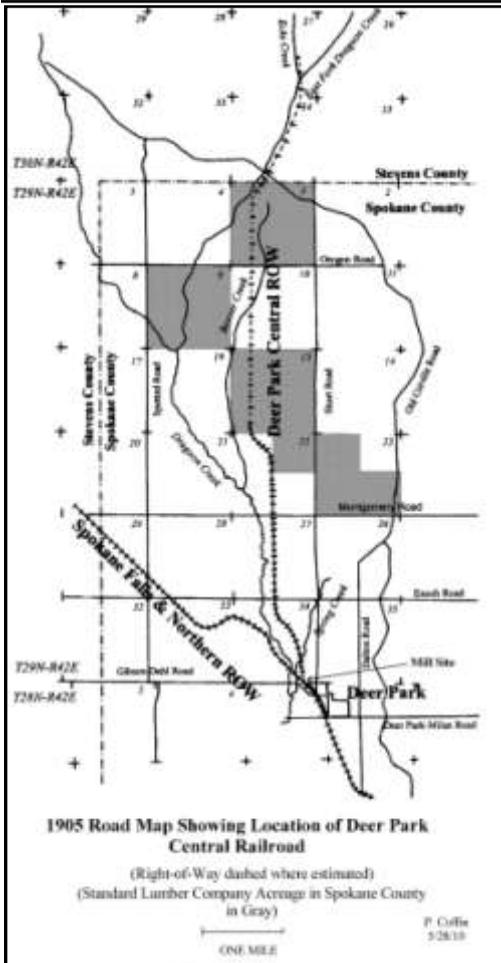
**Figure 3:** Photograph of the flat farmland looking south towards Deer Park from the Garden Spot Grange location (from NE corner of Section 3-T29N-R42E). This is representative of the flat topography that the Deer Park Central Railroad crossed to haul logs to the mill. (*Coffin photograph*)

The railroad ran across relatively flat land into the tracts of white pine timber that Short had purchased. W.H. Short had a policy of purchasing timberland when he could get it. A *Spokesman-Review* article (March 26, 1913) recorded that Standard Lumber Company had accumulated a stockpile of 15,000 cross ties ready for construction of a logging railroad from the mill to the forests north of the mill at a cost of \$35,000.

## RAILROAD EQUIPMENT

Initially the railroad had one used, coal fired, rod locomotive and some flat cars (Short, 1971, p. 54) which were to be used to haul logs from the woods. By 1913, the railroad was hauling logs from the forests north of the mill site, loading out cord wood for Spokane and taken delivery of 10 new flat cars (*Spokesman Review*, May 23, 1913). There must

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**Figure 4: The same map area as in Figure 2 but with the 1912 Ogle Land Ownership Map's Standard Lumber Company acreage in gray. Unfortunately I do not have acreage information for the Stevens County area north of the county line.**

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have been other rolling stock and maintenance equipment but as yet I have found no listing of them.

## HISTORIC RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DEER PARK CENTRAL RAILROAD

The following paragraphs were published in 1993 and in 2002 in supplements to the Deer Park Tribune describing the railroad and some events that took place on it. Unfortunately no author was credited.

*"The Standard Lumber Co. handled the vast amounts of wood processing in Deer Park, and as Zimmerer (Lawrence Zimmerer, local historian) remembered, built its own spur line running several miles from the mill into the woods. During this time, the spur had a number of cars attached to a small engine. After the logs were hauled to the railhead by horse-drawn wagons, they were loaded aboard the freight and trundled to the factory.*

In 1993 the late Herb Reiter, another long time Deer Park resident, recalled for the Tribune some of the history of Deer Park railroading.

*'My father came to the area in 1889,' Reiter said, 'and he told me how the early lines were started.'*

*Reiter's father bought 160 acres near Wild Rose Prairie from the railroad (SW/4 Section 27-T29N-R42EWM approximately 1 mile north of Deer Park). The SF&N and Great Northern owned most of the land in the area, so they were the only source from which you could purchase any appreciable amount.*

*According to Reiter, the lumber and agriculture benefits from the railroad were great.*

*'Three or four miles from Deer Park there was the White Pine lumber camp,' he said, 'and their products were sent to the Standard Mill. They built that line with five or six cars to haul the lumber, and they made quite a few runs a day.'*

*The lumber company's branch line ran only a quarter-mile from Reiter's home on North Short Road, and the junction with the Great Northern was just a few steps from that.*

*Several of the cars broke loose one day from the engine, ambled down the spur, which had a slight incline from the woods to the mill, and collided with a Great Northern freight at the junction.*

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*Luckily, no one was killed but several cows standing next to the track were obliterated by flying wreckage.*

*This was but one of a series of hair-raising incidents that occurred on the early railroad."*

## SALE OF THE DEER PARK RAILROAD

In March of 1914, Standard Lumber Company was sold to the R.L. Wilson-C.H. Wilson- W.M. Leuthold group. The Deer Park Central Railroad and all of its equipment was part of that sale and the railroad became the Deer Park Lumber Railroad. The tracks north of Deer Park continued to be used until about 1939, but Deer Park Lumber's main logging

Park Lumber Company railroad operations were being replaced by tractors and trucks.

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**Figure 5: One of the two Class B Shays owned by the Deer Lumber Company. The Deer Park Lumber engine roster lists two such locomotives with the Lima engine #2219 having built on October 12, 1909. This picture was taken in September 1920. (Photograph from the Lawrence Zimmer Collection)**

operation shifted to the Spokane Indian Reservation, using the Washington Water Power Company's Springdale and Long Lake Railroad from about 1917 to 1936. This line to Ford and Wellpinit was renamed the Deer Park Railway Company-but that is a separate story. By the middle 1930s, Deer

## A Very Busy Summer

Where did summer go? It passed so quickly and was so full of happenings, I sure didn't have time to relax.

First, we had the **Old Settlers Day** picnic and parade on July 24th. See how much fun we had visiting at the booth. I had to catch up on a few years with my old friends and make new ones too. Settlers' Day is always a time of reunion and I enjoyed visiting the members of the Class of 1960 and members of my own class, too.

Two weeks later, on August 7th, **Clayton**

**Brickyard Day** starts off with the benefit breakfast at the Clayton Drive-In, the Clayton Fun Run, the Brick-yard parade, the quilt show and the C/DPHS history exhibit at the Clayton School multi-purpose room. This schedule was highlighted with the dedication of the Clayton Terra Cotta Eagle. The par-



**An overflow crowd at the C/DPHS booth at Old Settlers Day at Mix Park. Photo by Penny Hutton**

ticipation of Lt. Colonel Kevin McMahan and the attendance of Rowena Valencia-Gica of the Washington State National Guard and many former guardsmen added cachet to the program.

August 14, 15, 21, 22, we dedicated to sponsoring Clayton's portion of the **Prestini Exhibit**. Bill Sebright and his team put together a great exhibit of Leno's paintings and memorabilia. Many items were loaned from folks in the community. We had paintings on gold pans, original paintings, photos of paintings, and boards telling the story of Leno's colorful life.

August 27, 28, 29 and 30 brings us to the **Clayton Fair**. Again Bill Sebright, Pete Coffin and helpers set up our display at the fair. We had the same area as last year with the additional security of a sliding door. We have continued to update our exhibits over  
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**Lt. Colonel McMahan, Commander, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry, Washington National Guard, accompanied by his young son. Photo by Sharon Clark**

**Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society  
Newsletter — Issue # 30 (October) — 2010**

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the year, thanks to our Eagle Project and the Prestini exhibits. Our summer was successful due

to volunteers who worked in preparing our exhibits and manning our booths, along with those of you who attended these summer activities. Thanks.



**Crowd estimated at 200 people, watch the Eagle dedication. Photo by Pete Coffin**

**Clayton/ Deer Park Historical Society Minutes, September 11, 2010**

In attendance: Pete Coffin, Bill Sebright, Mark Wagner, Sharon Clark, Warren Nord, Lorraine Nord, Art Stelling, Duane Costa, Roxanne Camp, Bob Clouse, Mary Clouse, Penny Hutten, Karen Meyer, Kathleen Knight, Don Ball, and Lorraine Ball.

Society president, Bill Sebright, called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

We still haven't received a bill from Knight Construction for the Eagle base or for putting it in place.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported that there is \$4,036.77 in checking. Checks written Deer Park School District \$100.00, DP Printing \$21.95, Star Spangled Banner \$50.00, Clayton Grange \$400.00 (\$200.00 was refunded). Deposits \$50.00, \$24.00, \$740.00.

Bill thanked all those who covered shifts at the Prestini Display and Clayton Fair. Both events went well. Many contacts were made at both displays. We found that it works well to have a guest book. It is a good way to check on names we may have forgotten.

(Grace was sick today. Get well, Grace! We missed you!) Grace Hubal reported that she is making great progress on the cookbook. Please send recipes to Grace if you have some to submit.

She also has finished typing up Art Stelling's "Becoming a Marine."

Sharon Clark reported that Chuck Stewart gave her a manuscript and Pete Coffin gave her a manuscript on sawmills in the area. Rick Slater, Doc Slater's grandson, sent Sharon a note thanking her for the article on Doc Slater. The articles in this month's Mortarboard #29, which she handed out, are "The Short Boarding House" and a detailed history on the Eagle.

Bob Clouse reported that there were 2,214 visitors to the website last month. This is about our average level.

Pete Coffin reported that he had scanned pictures from the family of Arletta Casberg Rasmussen. He also reported on the field trip he and Bill took to part of the old Brick-plant near the old Terra Cotta building. Pete is doing a write up on Jean Gray's father who was a World War I veteran. Pete gave Bill two reference pages of a catalog on terra cotta. Pete noticed the Society is being referenced more on the web.

Prestini Display- Bill reported that Lois and Leonard Turrell, now 90 and 94 attended. Their son Vern has sent many family pictures. Robert Wilson also attended and brought Leno sketches which were displayed in his mother's (Ella  
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Schmidt) Schmidt's Lunch Cafe, now the Brickyard Tavern. Bill noted that everyone enjoyed the display and seeing other people they haven't seen in years. We had a total of 12 Prestini paintings for the display.

Clayton Fair- Bill reported that Pete helped put a rolling door on our display area, so we didn't have to take displays down at night.

Penny Hutten reported that this is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Women's Right to vote in

Washington State; many activities are planned in the area to celebrate.

Pete brought up the idea of having the Societies website indexed for better searching capabilities.

No one has stepped forward to be Vice President, nominations will be held at our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 AM. Respectfully submitted by acting secretary, Mark Wagner.

*Special Thanks to our volunteer proof readers—Peter Coffin, Chuck Stewart and Grace Hubal*

## Editorial Policy Regarding Correcting Errors and/or Omissions

Information published here is compiled from many sources, including personal memories. It is often difficult or impossible to verify such recollections through outside documentation. Our editorial policy toward the veracity of personal recollections tends toward the casual — since little harm is normally done by such errors. But our editorial process also invites public review and input regarding the accuracy of the information we publish, and when such review either suggests or reveals errors or items open to dispute our "Letters" department will act as a forum allowing the airing of such disagreements in an effort to ascertain the truth and correct any probable or demonstrated errors. We also believe it's important that such disagreements be recorded, even if they can't be settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

We encourage everyone to submit any arguments as to fact to the editor in writing — since the written form reduces the chance of further misunderstandings. As is standard policy, all letters will be edited for spelling, word usage, clarity, and — if necessary — contents. If advisable, the editor will confer directly with the letter writers to insure that everyone's comments and corrections are submitted in a literate, polite, and compelling manner — as best suits the editorial image of this Society's publications.

## Society Want Ads

**WANTED:** Old family recipes for inclusion in a future Society recipe book. Recipes drawn from any given family's heritage are particularly desired — especially if accompanied by related family stories. Please submit to Grace Hubal, Society Secretary.

**WANTED:** Any stories, photos, or examples of traditional methods of quilt making.

**WANTED.** Information and photos regarding the history of Trysil/Zion Lutheran Church.

**WANTED:** Any stories and photos of your family's history in connection with their occupations and settlement in the Clayton/Deer Park Area.

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