May 2020

Better six feet apart than 6 feet under.

• The museum continues to be closed. We are following the recommendations and news from our state officials and the medical community, and community and will reopen when we feel it is safe for our staff, and our visitors. Our website is up and running and will have the latest news as it develops. You can also still leave us a voicemail and we'll return your call.

• It’s official. Sadly, the 20th Annual Car Show has been cancelled for this year. Not only is it likely there would have been a health risk during the event itself, it was also impossible for the dedicated volunteers that work so hard to plan and to raise money for the event, to get out and do the advance work which is critical to assuring the success of the event. We will soon be contacting those donors who have already contributed to see whether they would prefer to apply their donation to museum operations for this year, apply it to next year’s car show, or get a refund.

• Although our doors are closed, we are still fielding research questions! Our stellar researchers, Jan and Shirley, (and to a lesser extent, yours truly), are available to find the answers to your queries. Send us an email or give us a call. This month we have had people inquiring about an early movie theater in Belfair, early settlers around Lake Isabella, and some research about a family at Pickering Passage. Keep them coming! Like most people these days, we are looking for things to keep our minds occupied, and nothing makes us happier than delving into the history of Mason County.

• Feliks Banel, who did a presentation here on weather events last year, included our own Tollie in a May 1 story on KIRO about railroad engines in the Pacific Northwest.

WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!
PLEASE CONSIDER SHARING YOUR TALENTS WITH US!
(WHEN WE REOPEN)
In 1883, a group of wealthy easterners arrived at Lake Cushman, drawn by tales of excellent hunting and fishing. Russell Homan, leader of the group, bought a piece of property on Lake Cushman and built a rustic cabin. In 1898, Homan and Stanley Hopper formed a partnership with the purpose of building an exclusive resort on Homan's property, which included a half mile of lake frontage.

They chose Maurice Hanson, a native of Norway, to build the two-story hotel they named the Antlers. The Antlers was constructed of hewed logs, with large bay windows, and sat at the edge of Lake Cushman, with a backdrop of virgin timber and the Olympic Mountains. The interior was rustic but elegant, and a set of deer horns was placed in each room.

The Antlers opened for business on June 15, 1889. Rates were $2.50 per day, with special rates by week or month. Visitors from Seattle would take the steamer 'Perdita' from Gailbraith Dock (the current location of the Edgewater Hotel) to Hoodspor, then travel by stage to Lake Cushman.

In 1900, Russell Homan's mother came west to live with her son and bought out Hopper's interest in the Antlers. The hotel was in its glory during the very early years of the twentieth century. Guests from all over the country, including many prominent New Yorkers, came to socialize and try their hand at the excellent hunting and fishing. Prior to dinner, Russell Homan, an accomplished musician, entertained guests with selections played on his Eolion organ. Formal attire was required in the dining room, where guests sat down to gourmet meals.

When his mother died in 1907, Russell lost interest in running the hotel. He began to lease it out each season, retreating to his cabin and a life of hunting, fishing, and relaxing. Management changed frequently and the Antlers began to suffer from lack of care, consequently losing much of its appeal. Business also suffered from the advent of the automobile, which allowed visitors to drive up for a week-end and then leave, resulting in fewer rooms rented during the week.
In the early 1920s, Mason County granted a power franchise lease at Lake Cushman to the city of Tacoma. Before they could begin building their dam, the city faced numerous condemnation suits from landowners at Lake Cushman, led by Russell Homan. Originally offered $9,000, Homan said he would accept an out-of-court settlement of $18,000. The city refused his offer, the trial proceeded, and Homan was awarded $17,000 for his property. The Antlers ceased operation at the end of the tourist season of 1922. It was burned in 1925 and the remains were covered by 160 feet of water rising behind the Lake Cushman dam.

Russell Homan was the only original settler to remain in the area after construction of the dam. The home he built on higher ground used lumber taken from the Antlers, and he furnished it with items from the hotel.

Jan Parker is a Researcher at the Mason County Historical Museum and a contributor to the Shelton-Mason County Journal

Upcoming Events: Please watch our website and Face Book page for current information regarding our scheduled events. Or, call the museum at 360-426-1020 and we will respond to your message.

A huge thank you to those of you who have generously contributed as we contemplate the changing non-profit landscape, Jann Goodpaster, and Bill Johnson of Matlock. Thank you!

Nita’s Cooking – Reminisces and Recipes is back in stock! Thanks to author (and MCHS member) Carolyn Maddox, Nita’s cookbook has had a limited reprinting and we have them at the museum. You may order online, or leave us a voicemail at the museum, and we will set up an appointment to meet you and sell you one (or several!) They are $20 each, plus tax and shipping, if required. Get yours today!

You can help us save history!

The Mason County Historical Society is a collecting institution, and we would like to collect the history of this pandemic as it happens, from the perspective of the residents of Mason County. We are living through an experience that hasn’t been shared in this country since the time of our grandparents and great-grandparents. We are looking for examples of the current situation. These can be photos, written diaries, digital records (such as videos,) or printed materials. We will put this collection together when we can reopen and save it for future generations. Thank you!
Carolyn Dyson and Paul Jones reigned as king and queen of Southside School's May Day celebration on Sunday, May 3. Students from Kindergarten through seventh grade participated in the program that featured traditional May Pole dances.

Early in May, the Shelton Senior Citizens Council announced they had selected retired Shelton School Superintendent Rudy Oltman as Mason County Senior Citizen of the Year. He had been recommended by the Shelton Chamber of Commerce and the local Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs. Oltman had retired in June 1964 after serving for 20 years as Superintendent of Schools, and was involved in numerous community service activities.

B. Franklin Heuston, Shelton City Attorney, wrote a letter to the Olympic Air Pollution Control Authority stating the city's belief that its garbage operation was exempt from the Authority's rules and regulations. The basis for this position was that burning at the city dump was carried out under the direction of the city's fire chief for the purpose of preventing the major fire hazard that would develop if rubbish was allowed to accumulate and was subsequently started on fire either accidentally or maliciously.

For Mother's Day, Bob's Shoe Tree offered a special gift -- a pair of nylon mesh pumps and matching handbag in the "Miss Wonderful" print, available in brown, beige, multi-color, or orange-tone, for $26.

On May 14, owners of the Old Mill Tavern in Hoodsport encouraged patrons to enjoy the last Thursday buffet of the season before it was suspended on May 14. "The crush of tourist traffic is overwhelming, and something has to go." They planned to resume the popular Thursday buffet in the fall.

At the Queen's Banquet on Tuesday, May 19, Teresa Trimble was named queen of the 1970 Forest Festival. Princesses were Chris Sytsma, Linda Kriebs, and Mary Tabor from Shelton High School, and Crystal Lamb from North Mason High School.

On May 22, dedication ceremonies for a new historic bandsaw monument were held at a site near the existing log monument at the south entrance to Shelton. The 11-foot bandsaw drive wheel was from the former Simpson Mill 2. It was presented to Shelton Mayor Frank Travis, Jr. by Max Schmidt, Jr., Simpson's Washington Timberlands Manager.

The headline in the May 28 Journal announced, "Nervous NW Tranquilized; Gas Headed for Alaska." Washington Senator Henry M. Jackson had received a phone call from President Richard Nixon notifying him of the change in plans. (Officials in Alaska immediately began voicing opposition.)

The Forest Festival Parade was held on Saturday, May 23. The Paul Bunyan trophy for best float was awarded to South Kitsap High School. The Kamilche PTO float won the queen's trophy for best depicting the theme of the festival, which was "The 70's Clean and Green." The U. S. Forest Service, which had its display in the Jim Pauley Ford building window, was the sweepstakes winner in the Forest Festival window decorating contest. A capacity crowd enjoyed watching "climbers, birlers, buckers and other acts" during the logging show at Loop Field.
Everyone May Join – You become a member of the Mason County Historical Society immediately upon payment of dues. Membership includes voting rights at our annual meeting, eligibility to hold office on the board of directors, and ability to participate in activities and scheduled events of the society. Members also receive a 10% discount on books purchased through the museum. Annual memberships for individuals or organizations are $25 per year and Lifetime memberships are $250 per person.

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Please consider a gift to support your Mason County Historical Society.

Contributions support our mission to preserve, publish and promote the history of Mason County. We seek to continue building on our strengths of dedicated members, knowledgeable staff, and collaboration with the city, county, and other organizations as we continue to improve our museum.

The Mason County Historical Society is a 501 (c) (3) organization.

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Mason County Historical Society

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