

# Footprints

*on the sands of time...*

ISSUE LXVIII SOUTHWEST SEATTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY & LOG HOUSE MUSEUM WINTER 2008

## Me-Kwa-Mooks on Prairie Point



Suky Hutton, Alan Schmitz, Judy Bentley, and Barbara Olson unveil the new sign.

Photo courtesy of Rhonda Porter, [www.beachdriveblog.com](http://www.beachdriveblog.com)

Alan Schmitz, grandson of Ferdinand and Emma Schmitz, points to Sans Souci, the family home overlooking Puget Sound.

Photo Courtesy Steve Shay



**M**e-Kwa-Mooks. You know the park—the one that looks like a big field across from the shoreline about a mile south of Alki Point. Like its puzzling name, there's more to the park than first meets the eye.

A new sign at the park reveals its mysteries and history in five layers: geological upheaval, Native American villages, the Schmitz family estate, volunteer restoration efforts, and the Nelson Addition. According to grandson Alan Schmitz, Emma Schmitz chose the name Me-Kwa-Mooks because she didn't want any more parks named Schmitz. The word is an Anglicized spelling of a Lushootseed word, the language spoken by native people on the Duwamish Peninsula in the mid-1850's. The word means "prairie point."

About 300 years ago, a 9.0 earthquake along the Seattle Fault caused massive landslides whose effects can be seen in the 30-

acre park. The hillside behind the flat field is filled with springs, giving it the name Spring Hill. Water seeping through the deep, sandy soil onto clay creates an unstable slope.

In the 1850's, more than 700 Lushootseed-speaking people lived on the Duwamish peninsula in 17 villages, sustained by plentiful fish and shellfish and grassy and open prairies. The winter village of *T3EsbEd* (TUS-bud), meaning Cold Weather House, was located at Shore Place and Beach Drive, another half mile south of the park.

The evolution of the word Emma Schmitz picked is torturous. According to ethnologist T. T. Waterman, the Lushootseed word for Alki Point was spelled *SbEkwabEqs*. The E symbol was pronounced "u" as in nut, so the word was sbuh-KWAH-buks, according to contemporary historian Coll Thrush, author of *Native Seattle*. Waterman said the word meant "prairies" and was given to Alki

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What does the name Me-Kwa-Mooks mean?

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## Footprints

is the official publication of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society & "Birthplace of Seattle" Log House Museum

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## Museum hours

12–4 p.m.  
Thursday-Sunday

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Printing courtesy of



The Log House Museum  
is funded in part by



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Point, meaning many open places among the trees. David B. Williams, author of *Street-Smart Naturalist: Field Notes from Seattle*, also says Me-Kwa-Mooks is the rough-sounding equivalent of sbaqwabaqs (another rendition of Lushootseed) and means prairie point or prairie nose.

Me-Kwa-Mooks was also the name of an Indian village somewhere in the general vicinity of Alki or landforms around nearby Puget Sound. This village was mentioned in 1901 as the birthplace of Chief Jim Moses, grand-nephew of Chief Seattle.

From then on, the historical record clears. Ferdinand and Emma Schmitz immigrated from Germany in 1887 and succeeded in banking, restaurants, and real estate. They built a 17-room home on this site in 1907, calling it Sans Souci, without worry. The home used springs on the hill for water; the estate included elaborate flower gardens, an orchard (with some trees remaining), a well-stocked trout pond (no trout remaining), cows, horses, a flagpole and a pool table on the second floor. Dietrich Schmitz, a son, once shot a cougar in the surrounding woods. The extended family gathered yearly to make sauerkraut and beer.

Schmitz was a Parks Commissioner from 1908 to 1914, and the couple donated much of the land they had acquired to the city for parks. After Ferdinand's death in 1945, Emma gave 11 acres of Sans Souci shoreline and tidelands to the city, the Emma Schmitz Overlook. Sans Souci was torn down in the 1960's, and the city acquired the rest of the hillside property and shoreline in 1971.

*On the night before its unveiling, the Me-Kwa-Mooks sign was graffitied—a sixth layer of history added. Here, James Kizer cleans off the offending paint.*

Photo Courtesy Steve Shay.

Emma Schmitz, the daughter of Ferdinand and Emma, named the park Me-Kwa-Mooks in 1975. Remnants of the driveway and retaining wall as well as the location of the trout pond and the many springs can still be seen in the park.

Since the 1970's the property has been in the protective hands of the Seattle Parks Department, neighbors and schoolchildren. West Seattle High School students cleared trails in the 1970's. Pathfinder School students constructed a native plants garden and interpretive tiles in the 1990's and installed a plaque honoring Chief Seattle. Seattle Lutheran School students, Conservation Corps volunteers, and the Friends of Me-Kwa-Mooks regularly cut ivy, plant native plants, and build trails in the park.

In 2003 the Edwin S. Nelson Addition added 2.1 acres of a natural area along Jacobsen Road. This section and another were preserved from development through the efforts of the Cascade Land Conservancy, the Me-Kwa-Mooks Jacobsen Alliance, Seattle Parks, Susie King, Peter Goldman, Martha Kongsgaard, property owners Jim and Patsy Nelson, and funding from Pro Parks, Al Improvement Funds, and King County Conservation Futures Tax matching funds.

The sign was installed in October with donations to the Seattle Parks Foundation in memory of Susie King, a neighborhood advocate. With the support of the Alki Community Council and the research collections of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society, a committee of neighbors chose to draw attention to the park's history and mysteries.





## Museum Director's Report

This year is turning into another wonderful and busy year. We are lining up our summer walking tours of White Center, Riverside and Fauntleroy. Also, in the works are a photographic history of West Seattle and White Center book project. To accomplish this, photograph historian Bob Carney has been combing through our many images for just the right ones that tell history in a visually compelling way. The Log House Museum collections have just undergone a conservation survey by conservator Dana Senge, to assess and stabilize some of our more fragile artifacts such as the original name banner from the West Seattle ferry, the Statue of Liberty, and the totem pole. The original Boy Scout Statue of Liberty monument is resting inside the Log House Museum annex. She is no longer exposed to wayward birds overhead and arm-pulling youth... but before her arrival she did need

to spend time in a hard hat and safety glasses only zone at the Parks Department. We are very grateful that Seattle Parks staff safely transported her back home to Alki after her travels.

With the help of our board, volunteers, members and donors we are entering our 11<sup>th</sup> year. Raising funds to support the museum is the biggest challenge the museum faces. Your contributions this past year had a direct impact on what the museum was able to provide, which is why your support is so important. It is true when we say we could not do it without you. So thank you! If you wish to be involved with the walking tours or photograph book project, make a donation, or just have some spare time to scan a dozen or so historic photographs, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Andrea Mercado  
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*All 800 pounds of the original Statue of Liberty were carefully delivered by Seattle Parks and Recreation employees Ron Wrede, Mark Bentley (with his arm around the statue), and Richard Euteneier.*

*Photo courtesy SWSHS*





## Volunteer News

### Don Kelstrom, the Quiet Collector

Most of us rarely get to see Don Kelstrom up close in the daylight. True, starting about 2002 his name would pop up in "Footprints" as a member of the AKCHO-prize-winning Collections team or as a member of the Exhibit Committee whenever a new exhibit opened. But most of Don's hundreds of volunteer hours have been at night in the collection rooms at the museum or at South Seattle Community College. Don's forte is historical research on old photographs and documents. His hobby of restoring old cars equips him to date old photos by the model years of cars on the street.

But what endears him most to director Andrea Mercado and former director Pat Filer is his quiet and cheerful steadiness during those tense final days before an exhibit opens. You name it, and Don's there to fix it no matter how late--leaks in the basement, cleaning the gutters, replacing fence boards, changing exterior light bulbs, hanging Xmas lights on the porch, pruning limbs after a storm.

Born in North Dakota, Don grew up in West Seattle on 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue near Mt. Saint Vincent, attending Jefferson, Madison, and West Seattle High, '60. While working in finance and accounting for General Electric and the City of Seattle, he began restoring old Studebakers. His Fauntleroy house used to be jammed with car parts and memorabilia, but now that he's retired, he's down to seven Studebakers, ranging from the 1933 Roadster in the photo to a 1967 Avanti. It was through this hobby that Don first met LHM volunteer and Studebaker buff Bob Carney, who later talked Don into working on the collections team. Don says that in school he never saw much point in memorizing dates, but now he really enjoys putting dates to work for the museum as well as the warm friendships formed with Andrea, Pat, and his other collections colleagues.

*by Larry Carpenter*

*Volunteer Coordinator, 206-938-0887, starving@comcast.net*

*Photo courtesy Odd Justad*





## Vice President's Report

The Board began 2008 with a Saturday retreat to plan for the year. Having celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Log House Museum in November, our challenge now is to sustain and build on that solid foundation. We have an invigorating director with visions of interpreting and re-interpreting the heritage and history of southwest Seattle, from its Duwamish roots through the Alki landing and waves of new residents. History is happening among us, whether it's the restoration of the Statue of Liberty, a Richard Hugo night in White Center, the neighborhood diaries videos by Chief Sealth students, the oral history project around the old Cooper School, exhibits at the museum, or new signs at Me-Kwa-Mooks and the Belvedere story pole.

Always, for the board, the financial challenges are uppermost. The billboard advertisements for the Log House Museum do not indicate we are flush with marketing funds; they are donated as a public service by Clear Channel.

The city provides no continuing operations funds. We must constantly write grants and plan events to sustain the museum and staff. Community organizations like ours depend on local support—of time, goodwill, and funds. Luckily, we are blessed with a very supportive community and volunteers like Don Kelstrom, profiled in this issue by Larry Carpenter, our volunteer coordinator.

This year we are asking members to join board committees—Outreach, Administration, Fundraising, Program, Facilities, and Collections. These committees will meet several times during the year to implement strategies to achieve our goals. We are also forming an Advisory Council to advise the board. If you would like to become a more active part of this society in any way, stop by the museum, call, or email. Let's do coffee.

Judy Bentley  
Vice President



Judy Bentley  
Vice President  
[jbentley@sccd.ctc.edu](mailto:jbentley@sccd.ctc.edu)

## Join a Committee!

Put your skills to work for a committee of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society/Log House Museum. Committees will meet three-six times during the year (some more than others). Each committee is chaired by an executive board member and reports to the board. Organizations thrive on the good old-fashioned work of committees. We need your talents for the following:

**Facilities and Capital Improvements**—maintenance and management of the Log House Museum and grounds

**Administration and Organization Development**—includes human resources (staff and volunteers), nominations, advisory board development

**Outreach**—includes community relations, partnerships, marketing, publicity, Footprints

**Fundraising and Finance**—develop stable financial resources for museum operations.

**Collections**—advises gathering and processing of museum collections

**Program**—advises director on publications, exhibits, education, interpretive events

Email Vice-President Judy Bentley if you would like to join any of these committees: [jbentley@sccd.ctc.edu](mailto:jbentley@sccd.ctc.edu).





## Business Members

Admiralty House  
Antiques

Banana Pages

Better Business  
Bookkeeping

Clear Channel  
Outdoor

David Kehle  
Architect

The Good Book

Graphics Plus

Jackson & Morgan  
PLLC

NW Art & Frame

The Pacific Institute

Sposari's Concrete  
& Materials

Tom's Automotive

Villa Heidelberg

West Seattle Herald

*The Statue of Liberty overlooking her domain prior to her move to the Tacoma foundry.*

*Courtesy SWSHS*



*Her tenure with Seattle Parks and Recreation kept her in a hard-hat and safety goggle zone.*

*Courtesy Seattle Parks & Recreation*

*At the Tacoma foundry, she waited near her replacement before the new statue received a protective patina.*

*Courtesy Northwest Program for the Arts. Visit [www.sealady.org](http://www.sealady.org) for further information.*





## Belvedere Park Story Pole

Every year, thousands of people from all over the world pull into a narrow turnout adjacent to Admiral Avenue for an unparalleled view of Seattle. Hundreds of West Seattle residents drive by daily. An added bonus to their skyline view is the totem poles that have stood sentinel on the north side of the park for 69 years. The first totem pole was put in place in 1939, the second duplicate in 1966 (currently found on the grounds of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society/Log House Museum), and for just over a year a Story Pole has graced the location. The only pole in Seattle to be carved by a Duwamish tribal member and tell a story of the history of Seattle, now shares that tale with all who pull over into that sliver of a parking area. Members of the Admiral Community Council Al Rousseau and Dennis Ross worked many years on replacing the previous totem pole which was in quite a state of deterioration. They had always intended for a new

interpretive sign to be installed alongside the new story pole, but it did not happen immediately due to lack of funds. When community member Victor Lombardi stepped forth and offered to assist, the sign became a reality. Sunk in 300 pounds of buried concrete, the colorful sign eloquently shares history of the area including Chief Seattle and Duwamish artist and woodcarver Michael Halady. This was a cooperative effort between the Admiral Community Council, Seattle Parks Department, the Duwamish Tribe, the Southwest Seattle Historical Society/Log House Museum along with the skills and written contributions of community members including Tim St. Clair. As Victor Lombardi commented "We wanted to complete the experience for our neighbors and all fellow travelers from around the world who make this little special part of West Seattle a place to visit. This is a significant landmark in the community, and I just thought that people would like to know what it's all about."



The museum is collecting your personal photographs of any of the three totem poles at the Admiral overlook with or without the skyline throughout these past 69 years. Did you pose there with your first car? First date? First time to West Seattle? We would love to see them for an online exhibit. Contact us at 206-938-5293. For more information on the totem poles at Belvedere Park visit [www.loghousemuseum.org](http://www.loghousemuseum.org) or stop by the museum.

*Attending the unveiling of an interpretive sign at the Belvedere story pole were, from left: Bill Hartwich and Todd Smith of Seattle Parks and Recreation; Judy Bentley and Andrea Mercado, Southwest Seattle Historical Society; Dennis Ross, Admiral Community Council; Victor Lombardi, neighbor and donor; Ron Richardson, SWSHS and Steve Levey, Admiral Neighborhood. Also in attendance was (photographer) Clay Eals.*

### 2008 Executive Board

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*Vice-President*

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Board Secretary*

### Trustees

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*Ron Richardson*

*Joey Richesson*

*Judy Townsend*

*Tony Vincent*

### Staff

*Andrea Mercado  
Museum Director*

*David Keith  
Bookkeeper*

*Joyce Anderson  
Gift Shop Clerk*

**NOTICE:  
THERE WILL  
BE NO  
HOME TOUR  
THIS YEAR**





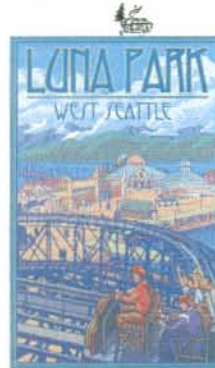
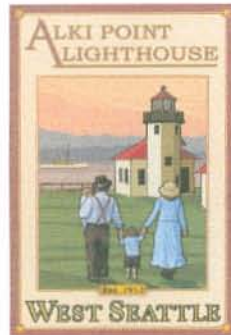
## Gift Shop

### Mission of the SWSHS & Log House Museum

“... to advocate  
the collection,  
protection and  
preservation of  
historic artifacts  
and sites, and to  
sponsor programs  
and events which  
enhance our  
community's  
heritage”

Exciting news from the Log House Museum Gift Shop! We will be updating and remodeling the shop for the coming busy summer season here on Alki Beach. We have just stocked some beautiful new color cards from Lantern Press which our customers have been buying like crazy! We also plan to do some “side walk” sales once

the weather warms up and spring is upon us. We have some great new book titles in as well as our usual favorites such as *Sons of the Profits* and *4 Wagons West*. So do stop by and browse through all the new products after your visit!



These two postcards are part of the Lantern Press series, new to the gift shop.

## In Memoriam

Steven Mraz, editor of Footprints, died on February 26. Steven was the son of longtime board member and past president Joan Bailey Mraz. He had edited and designed the newsletter for three years and served the Southwest Historical Society in many other ways, including providing computer savvy assistance. He will be greatly missed.

**Answer**  
Prairie Point

### FOOTPRINTS

Newsletter of the Southwest Seattle Historical Society  
& “Birthplace of Seattle” Log House Museum  
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