**Doggerel decried a new city’s blasted stumps**

In July of 1883, attendance at Tacoma’s Independence Day celebration was estimated at 8,000. Not all of the visitors were impressed with the young city.

One from Puyallup penned a versified complaint, which he submitted to the *Tacoma Daily Ledger*.

The author used the word “Sheballup” for New Tacoma, which the *Ledger* editor noted, “means the dry or well drained town.” The editor also commented “we print the effusion, instead of consigning it to the Balsam box. This act, however, is not to be regarded as a precedent.” The complaint about stumps appears on Page 3.

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*Blasted Stumps* comes to us courtesy of Deb Freedman, who came across it in the course of her research into Tacoma’s Jewish pioneers.

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**Society honors Stover, Liddle and Sias**

Karla Wakefield Stover, who writes the monthly “Walkabout” column on local history for *Senior Scene*, has been named the 2008 winner of Tacoma Historical Society’s Murray Morgan Award.

The annual award recognizes individuals and organizations that have significantly contributed to efforts to preserve and communicate local history.

The presentation was made April 14 at the Tacoma Historical Society’s 18th annual meeting, held at the downtown campus of Bates Technical College.

A native Tacoman, Stover is a graduate of Wilson High School and the University of Washington Tacoma. She recently retired from Merrill Lynch after a 42 1/2-year career. She has a radio show, “Local History with Karla Stover,” on KLAY.

The society’s Murray Morgan Award honors the late Tacoma historian, teacher and author who died in 2000.

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EDITOR’S VIEW:
Too successful perhaps?

It has been our goal to encourage interest in Tacoma history. In April, however, we had occasion to wonder if perhaps we haven’t been too successful. Quite a few people who wanted to hear Prof. Douglas Sackman on the history of Wright Park were turned away at the door of Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum.

However, if you missed the program, you have a second chance. At 6 p.m. Oct. 9 Prof. Sackman will reprise his presentation at Karpeles, 407 S. G St. It is titled “An Oasis in the Great Desert of the City’s Thoroughfares: Wright Park and the Two Natures of Tacoma 100 Years Ago.”

Sackman is a member of the history faculty at the University of Puget Sound.

Let the record show …

For librarians and others who keep track of such things, our Winter 2008 issue was labeled Vol. 12 No. 2. It should have been No. 3.

IN MEMORIAM

Mike Stork, a much-honored teacher and a photographer who documented many Tacoma waterfront activities, died May 16 at the age of 60. The son of a Foss tugboat captain, he was the author of the recent book, Foss Maritime Company.

Thomas J. Sheehy, longtime Tacoman and loyal attender of Tacoma Historical Society meetings, died May 23, 2008, at 89.

Those blasted stumps

The pages of the Ledger routinely carried complaints about the condition of the streets and sidewalks, including the fact that owners were petitioning the council to have stumps and logs removed so that they could have lumber delivered to their building sites.

However, the stumps did have their value. Ledger, August 22, 1883, “Among the many stumps that at present disfigure the vacant lots in town, there are a great number of cedar ones which are quite valuable for shingle bolts... One enterprising citizen has already begun clearing stumps wherever he can get them, and is doing quite a thriving business.”

Five years later the stumps were still a problem, but the removal efforts were more drastic. Tacoma Daily Ledger, Saturday, August 4, 1888, “BLASTING STUMPS. A Large Crowd Witness the Effects of Powder at Ninth and M streets. The exhibition of stump blasting given by Messrs. Hunt & Mottet, the hardware merchants, yesterday afternoon...was an unqualified success...A small hole was first drilled under the stump, and into this several pounds of the Champion powder were placed, the amount varying according to the size of the stump... Six large stumps were bored, as described above, and the fuses lighted.

In a few seconds occurred a terrific explosion, when stumps and roots, weighing hundreds of pounds, mingled with dust, smoke, gravel and stones were hurled into the air, to a distance of over one hundred feet, some of the smaller pieces ascending over two hundred feet. When the debris had settled and the smoke had cleared away the places where the stumps had stood were examined. Nothing was left of the stumps in the ground but a few tiny roots. The work of execution was perfectly satisfactory.

A large crowd was present and expressed themselves as greatly pleased with the entertainment.”

Miraculously, the article carried no mention of injuries.

Plans on track for 2nd annual auction and dinner Oct. 12

Believing that one good auction deserves another, the Tacoma Historical Society will hold its second annual “Destiny” Dinner & Auction on Sunday, October 12, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Tacoma Yacht Club.

The society held its inaugural auction and dinner on Oct. 14, 2007. Results were so gratifying that the committee almost immediately started in with planning the 2008 event.

Seating is limited to 150. Cost for the dinner and auction is $60 per person. Invitations have been mailed to Tacoma Historical Society members. If you were missed or would like additional invitations, please let us know.

Theme for this year’s event is “A Streetcar Named Destiny.” Two featured speakers – Brian Kamens of Tacoma Public Library’s Northwest Room and Morgan Alexander of TacomaStreetcar.com – will discuss “Tacoma’s Streetcars: Then and Now.”

Alexander is a community activist and is a leading advocate of returning streetcars to Tacoma’s transportation scene. Tacoma replaced its streetcars with buses in 1938.

Auction items will include unique art and jewelry pieces, photos and collectibles, gift certificates to restaurants and businesses and many entertainment opportunities, including a harbor history cruise aboard the Destiny.

If you have items to donate or would like to help with the auction please contact the committee at auction@tacomahistory.org.

Auction proceeds support the society’s operations, including its Exhibit Center for Tacoma history at 747 Broadway.
Memorial Service revives a proud tradition
By Polly Medlock

It was May 30, 1970, 38 years ago, that the last Memorial Day service was held in Tacoma in Wright Park. It was sponsored by Edward B. Rhodes Post 2, American Legion, and 200 attended. The program included speeches by U.S. Sen. Henry M. Jackson and the Fort Lewis commander, Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Tarpley. Music was provided by a Fort Lewis band. An Army Reserve rifle squad was present. A reception followed at the Legion post across the street at 407 S. G St.

The likely reason that there was not another Memorial Day service held in Tacoma’s Wright Park was the disruption caused in 1970 by some 50 not so peaceful peaceniks of a Tacoma Area War Resistance Group. It was led by Timothy Pettett and included that day the Rev. Milton Andrews of Epworth United Methodist Church, Seattle Black Panthers and others. The protesters were expected. The park was ringed by Legionnaires and police were on hand. The disturbance occurred because the protesters were not allowed in the park with their signs. Dave F. Vance, a resistance leader, was arrested for disturbing the peace, and the Rev. Mr. Andrews chose to join him the police car. Mr. Andrews was not booked, however. The group presented its own program following the American Legion’s. It included speakers and a “guerrilla theater” presentation.

There were other Memorial programs presented on that day, the real Memorial Day, May 30th. One was by the Tacoma Amvets at the Memorial Park at the Narrows, one in Fircrest, another by the Tacoma Yacht Club, and others in cemeteries in the county on private property. Since 1970 most of the Memorial Day services have been held in cemeteries. Until 2008, the American Legion had not again played a major role in a service.

This year the Tacoma Historical Society and Edward B. Rhodes/Parkland Post 2 American Legion sponsored a Memorial service on Saturday, May 24, at 3 p.m. in Tacoma’s War Memorial Park near the Narrows bridges. It is an attempt to bring back to Tacoma an annual Memorial service. It was planned and arranged by THS board member Charlotte Medlock. All who attended thought it “very good,” and there was no disturbance. Master of ceremonies was World War II veteran James Wells. Music and color guard came from Fort Lewis I Corps. Stadium High School Navy JROTC was present and helpful. Herman Kleiner, WWII veteran and of Temple Veth El gave the invocation and benediction.

The Rev. Dr. Francis Jeffery, World War II veteran and a Lutheran pastor, was keynote speaker. Mildred Farrow, a Gold Star wife, sang. She placed a wreath on the World War II monument and was assisted by Post 2 Legionnaire commander Ronald Rich and Capt. Ret. R. Leonard Medlock, WWII veteran, and was accompanied by Bruce Corns, bagpiper, playing “Amazing Grace.” Neil Vosburgh, singer from Life Center, sang “God Bless America.” Punch and cookies were served by ladies of Doughboy Memorial American Legion auxiliary, and Buddy Poppies were distributed. The day was beautiful, warm and sunny. Perfect! There were at least 100 in attendance. Very good for the first Memorial Service in Tacoma after 38 years.
Exhibit recalls heyday of passenger trains
By David Chesanow

The Empire Builder. The Mainstreeter. The Olympian Hiawatha. The Galloping Goose … They sound almost mythical today, like gods of yore – and in a sense they were: for it was these and other trains that transported raw materials and finished goods through mountains and plains, carried people and news, linked communities and consolidated a sprawling nation.

They were powered by coal, diesel or electricity – steam locomotives and streamliners pulling boxcars, flatcars, cattle cars and coaches with all kinds of travelers aboard: troops and tourists; businessmen on sales rounds and Boy Scouts bound for distant jamborees; politicians making whistle-stop speeches and plain folks visiting relatives.

See these departed giants in “Passenger Trains of Puget Sound, 1900 to 1970,” an exhibit at The Tacoma Historical Society’s Exhibit Center (till Sept. 27) featuring railroad memorabilia and period photographs by retired Burlington Northern trainman and author Jim Fredrickson.

There are posters and playing cards, timetables and dining car tableware, uniforms, notices and other ephemera – all a blast from our railroading past – but the real stars of “Passenger Trains of Puget Sound” are Frederickson’s haunting monochrome images.

Now 81, Fredrickson began photographing trains in 1936. In 1943 he was hired as a “callboy” by the Northern Pacific Railway – his job was to telephone train and engine crews to tell them what time to report for work – and later became a telegrapher, a train dispatcher at Tacoma’s Union Station and a transportation assistant in Seattle, where he oversaw area train operations after the Northern Pacific and other lines merged to form the Burlington Northern Railroad in 1970.

Fredrickson’s knowledge of his subject is encyclopedic: He can effortlessly identify dozens of trains on sight, cite the engine specifications and the types of cars they hauled, the stops they made and even the ticket prices. Imagine THAT in this age when a lot of kids ride a train only as a school field trip – not ON a field trip but AS a field trip!

As for Fredrickson’s pictorial record, this self-taught photographer is, deservedly, something of an icon among railroad enthusiasts. Washington State University Press has published three books of his photos with commentary: Steam to Diesel: Jim Fredrickson’s Railroading Journal, Railroad Shutterbug: Jim Fredrickson’s Northern Pacific and Railscales: A Northern Pacific Brasspounder’s Album.

Tacoma Historical Society’s Exhibit Center at 747 Broadway is open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 5 p.m., 5 to 8 p.m. on third Thursdays. This article first appeared on David Chesanow’s website, www.AmeriCollector.com, and is reproduced by his permission.

Exhibit Center boasts new display cases, thanks to Bates Technical

Museum-quality display cases have been on the wish list ever since the society opened its Exhibit Center in December 2005.

Now that dream has been achieved, thanks to the apprenticeship program at Bates Technical College in association with Seattle/Tacoma Millmen & Cabinet Makers JATC.

The apprentices, under the direction of instructor Dave McKeen, recently completed construction and installation of new, museum-quality display cases.

The project was funded in large part by a generous gift from a friend of the society.

Finished in June, the cases were put to immediate use to show off part of Jim Fredrickson’s collection of railroad memorabilia in connection with the current exhibit, “Passenger Trains of Puget Sound, 1900 to 1970.”
Murray Morgan Bridge leads 2008 list of state’s most-endangered historic sites

Spanning the Thea Foss Waterway, Tacoma’s Murray Morgan Bridge stands as a reminder of the challenges facing historic bridges throughout Washington State and across the nation. Critical maintenance and monitoring issues these engineering marvels face were tragically brought to light with the collapse of I-35 in Minneapolis in August of 2007.

The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation chose the Murray Morgan Bridge as the site for a May 27 press conference announcing the group’s 2008 list of most-endangered properties. The Murray Morgan Bridge heads that list.

Dominating the Tacoma skyline when it was built in 1913, the Murray Morgan Bridge, known then as the 11th Street Bridge, played a key role in the city’s urban development by linking downtown to the waterfront and the Tideflats industrial area. Designed by renowned bridge engineers Waddell and Harrington, the bridge is remarkable for the height of the deck, the overhead span designed for carrying a water pipe, and its construction on a grade.

In addition, the bridge figures prominently in Tacoma’s social history, serving as the setting for gatherings and labor disputes, including a violent strike in 1916, just three years after completion. In 1997, the bridge was renamed after Tacoma native Murray Morgan, a noted Washington writer and historian.

The bridge became part of the state’s highway system in 1937. But with new transportation corridors constructed in the 1990s, the 11th Street route was seen as less critical and the state transportation department entered into negotiations with the City of Tacoma to return the bridge to municipal ownership. Failure to agree on the terms of transfer has led to a stalemate, and concerns surrounding deferred maintenance prompted the state to close the bridge to vehicular traffic in fall 2007. More recently, the bridge was closed to all traffic.

At present, the main obstacle to saving the bridge is the great expense: recent studies indicate that restoration of the Murray Morgan Bridge would cost $80 million. Supporters, however, remain undaunted. A strong coalition of Tacoma-based preservationists, history buffs and elected officials continue to call for rehabilitation, citing the National Register-listed bridge as an example of innovative engineering and its importance to Tacoma’s history as justification for preservation.

Information about the Save Our Bridge organization is available by contacting Jim Hoard at (253) 272-7272 or Jim_Hoard@hotmail.com.

Kudos for THS

**Polly Medlock’s leadership** in establishing a monument to Pierce County World War II dead was recognized recently in the form of three awards:

- Gold medal for historic preservation from the national society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.
- An award from the Military Order of World Wars, shared with Leonard Medlock and Robert Campbell.

The monument was erected in Tacoma’s War Memorial Park and dedicated on Veterans Day, 2007, culminating years of research and fund-raising.

**Dr. Dale Wirsing’s work** on behalf of the Tacoma Historical Society was recognized recently when he received the 2008 John H. Binns Distinguished Service Award. The award is presented annually by the Friends of the Tacoma Community College Library and recognizes significant contributions to the culture of the Pacific Northwest.

Binns (1895-1980) was a well-known Tacoma attorney who served as a Superior Court judge, a Tacoma School Board member and first chairman of Tacoma Community College’s Board of Trustees.
Ruth Wheeler, a friend to Tacoma history and a Mason descendant, passes at 95

The Tacoma Historical Society’s dear friend, Ruth Wheeler, passed away June 5, 2008, at the age of 95. Ruth was a happy, friendly little lady who loved Tacoma’s history and became a member of the society in its early days. She served on the Board of Directors, was corresponding secretary, and on the Communications Committee. With Polly Medlock she toured the North End, visiting homes and searching for those appropriate for the annual Historic Homes of Tacoma Tour.

Ruth was one of Allen C. Mason’s granddaughters and preserver of the family history. She would laughingly recount her grandmother’s opinion of Mr. Mason’s acquisition of the mummy of Ankh Unnefir, an Egyptian priest from the 8th century B.C. “It would not reside in her home!”

Ruth took pride in her Wheeler Family background and her family’s place in Tacoma history. The Wheeler-Osgood Company, large producer of fir doors, was established by her grandfather, William C. Wheeler, in 1889.1

After Ruth’s move to Enumclaw she kept in touch with Polly and with Judith Kipp, who visited with her over luncheon in her home once each summer. A dear friend is gone, one who loved Tacoma and shared with the society a number of her family’s historical items.

How sad that Ruth did not live long enough to see or at least know of completion of the Allen C. Mason Plaza being built to honor her grandfather at North 26th and Adams near her longtime home on North 21st Street.

Donations to Tacoma Historical Society in Ruth Wheeler’s name would be greatly appreciated.

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– Polly Medlock

1. The Wheeler-Osgood Waterway, now an inlet on the east side of the Thea Foss Waterway, was the original mouth of the Puyallup River. It was named for the company. In 1951 the Wheeler-Osgood plant was closed and the company liquidated.

Death takes Dorothy Damiano Trip, chronicler of state’s artists

Another of the Tacoma Historical Society’s dear friends, Dode Trip, passed away July 5, 2008, in her Tacoma home. She was greatly admired by her many friends and acquaintances and especially by Northwest artists and historians. She received several awards, including the Murray Morgan Award presented to her by the Tacoma Historical Society in 2005.

Dode was a talented artist and a collector of paintings and records of Pacific Northwest artists. She co-authored with Dr. Sherburne F. Cook Jr. Washington State Art and Artists, 1850–1950. Her home was a gallery!

Dode was born and raised in Tacoma, graduated from Stadium High School, studied at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, and worked in drafting in Tacoma and Washington, D.C. Her career included work at Gunderson Jewelers and Fisher Department Store in Tacoma and in Puerto Rico. She was talented in so many areas!

It was my pleasure to assist my neighbor and my friend Dode in researching for her book, and what a joy it was! We went to the Washington State Library in Olympia many times. On other occasions in the Tacoma, Seattle, and Portland libraries I helped gather information for Dode’s files, which at present contain well over 6,000 names. More than 800 are Tacoma artists.

Although Dode is no longer with us, I shall continue to contribute to her records, and the information will not be lost. Dode promised that her daughter, Chris, would see to it that her second book is published and that the files would one day go to Tacoma Public Library’s Northwest Room.

Oh how I shall miss Dode and our conversations over tea at her kitchen table.

– Polly Medlock
 Regular meetings

October 13, 2008, Monday, 7 pm
Tacoma Public Library
“The Selden Saga”
Stan Selden and Dr. Ronald Magden, who has recently completed a book on the family’s remarkable story.

November 10, 2008, Monday, 7 pm
Grace Baptist Church, 2507 N. Vassault St.
“Pictures from a New Home: Early Nordic Immigrant Painters in Tacoma and Pierce County”
Dr. Brian Magnusson, a scholar at home in Tacoma and Sweden

Mark your calendars – Tacoma Historical Society’s second annual ‘Destiny’ Dinner and Auction, 4–8 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 12, at Tacoma Yacht Club.