
THE STORY OF LEWISVILLE PARK

BY

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Not so many years ago there was no problem of finding recreation and picnic spots anywhere in our area. Even though roads were fewer and often primitive and rough, and the means of transportation limited to horses or, perhaps, rowboats, shady forested places were readily available within easy reach without price or much restriction. In fact a pressing question was how best to rid the land of timber and make way for agriculture.

But drastic change struck down all but fragments of the ancient forest. A number of elements contributed to this. Accelerated immigration of course also accelerated the free use of ax, saw, and fire in enlarging fields and increasing fast the number of farms; local sawmills sprang up mushroom-like to supply augmenting demands for lumber and railroad ties; and terrible forest fires, like the Yacolt Burn of 1902, denuded hundreds of square miles.

In the earlier days much of the privately held timber was unfenced, often affording common pasture to cattle from near-lying "ranches". These free-range lands, hand in hand with the disappearance of the great forests, were being rapidly inclosed, until the venturer on a pleasure trip in his "tin lizzie" with his family might well find himself driving mile after mile confronted on either side of the somewhat improved road by fences studded with 'no trespass signs', or by the drab litter of deserted logging camps. Disenchanted, the excursion might well end with a luncheon among the dusty weeds near the roadside. The passing of time progressively increased the hindrances to satisfactory outings with no relief in sight. The efforts of some isolated enterprisers to remedy the situation with commercial campgrounds were entirely inadequate. Thus matters stood at the middle nineteen-thirties.

It is an ill wind, it is said, that blows nobody any good, implying that generally great difficulties may be compensated to an extent by some blessings. So it proved in this troublesome case. Paradoxically, the great economic depression of those years actually opened the way for achieving Lewisville Park, and its success has made our public permanently alert to the necessity of acquiring, building up, and maintaining adequate recreation facilities within easy reach, for its own well-being. But to the story:

The federal government in unprecedented efforts to get purchasing power into the hands of needy people was setting up agencies, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), to foster worth-while civic projects and allocating funds for the same throughout the nation. A sizeable sum was thus tentatively allotted to Clark County for recreational purposes. This was called to the attention of Mr. Earl Durdle, Clark County Agricultural Agent, who arranged a meeting in Vancouver with Mr. E. N. Miller of the Washington State College Extension Service in charge of WPA matters. The opportunity for getting a county recreational center was figuratively knocking at the door.

At least partially because it would bring employment and money, there was immediate sympathetic reaction to the idea, but different localities began "plugging" for sites favorable to their particular interests. For instance, Vancouver suggested Leverich Park and other Vancouver sites. No such site was, for one or several reasons, at all feasible or met with significant public approval. The county owned nothing that could be used; and to acquire land, even if owners were willing to sell, would put a strain on its resources. Recall that those were lean times. Time began slipping by without definite action, and fears were expressed that the WPA offer might be withdrawn. And that danger was real.

But Mr. Durdle had had his vision of a better outcome, and fortunately was able to rally around him a number of very competent persons that enthusiastically shared his outlook. From among these he organized a committee to survey the entire situation and work toward a solution. The chairman of this committee was Heye Meyer. The other members were Oscar L. Hanson, Mrs. Joseph /Agnes/ LaLonde, Karl West, Mrs. Rudolph Geiser, and Mr. Durdle in person. All three members of the board of county commissioners, Ray Woolf, Charles Garber, and Paul Schumann, cooperated closely and by their actions as a board made a successful outcome possible.

Prior to the appointment of the committee, however, the county commissioners had expressed a desire to have the matter put directly before the people in some manner, feeling that this was necessary since the only funds the county had that could be used in buying land was what was commonly called the Dog Race funds, accrued from licensing of dog racing - a practice which had been discontinued. This amounted to about \$5,000. Accordingly Mr. Durdle, as extension agent, issued a call for a meeting at the court house of Grange masters, school heads, and representatives of service groups. This meeting voiced strong support for the project; and it was then that the previously mentioned committee was named. A second meeting also at the old court house, attended by people from outlying towns, discussed the matter, but took no action.

Mr. Woolf, then chairman of the board of county commissioners, laid the affair before the Clark County Planning Board, a brand-new body set up shortly before under a law just passed by the 1935 legislature. Its twelve members were unanimously in favor of a park and assisted materially

in solidifying public opinion in its favor. The chairman of the planning board was School Superintendent Schenk of Ridgefield; other members were Charles Deako, Oscar L. Hanson, Dr. R. D. Wiswall, and R. S. Durkee.

Mr. Durdle's committee immediately went to work. They inspected a number of sites, such as Leverich Park and Ladine Park, a private enterprise on the Lewis River above the present park, but found them all either unsatisfactory or unavailable. They meanwhile continued as a body and individually to do missionary work for a park. Chairman Heye Meyer as Deputy State Grange Master visited every Grange in the county urging the park. The Granges rallied to the project "without one dissenting vote." But weeks, even months, sped by without anything concrete being accomplished, however much the committee might try. The WPA offer still held good, but time was definitely running out on it.

At this critical juncture Mrs. Letha Greene of Lewisville is credited with having suggested to the committee that the Teal place of 76 acres near Lewisville might be secured. This suggestion proved to be the key that eventually opened the way. Negotiations started, followed by purchase, but more land was needed. Subsequently additional adjacent land was bought from Herman Potter and John Banks.

At this point it seems relevant to insert a couple of passages further illustrating the foregoing events and adding something more.

The first is from the Vancouver Columbian of May 9, 1936:

"Hearing speaker after speaker extol the advantages of a proposed site for the county rural recreation center on the east fork of Lewis river at Lewisville and urge acquisition of all available land, the Clark county planning commission at a regular session last night adopted a resolution urging the county commissioners to purchase the entire tract of 250 acres regardless of whether or not a federal appropriation is forthcoming for its development.

"In the discussion which preceded the action, the site was endorsed by speakers representing the Vancouver junior chamber of commerce, the city planning commission, and the Kiwanis, Rotary and Gyro clubs. Others likewise approved the location and throughout the discussion particular emphasis was laid upon securing the full 250 acres, which lies in three tracts under as many ownerships. Speaker after speaker said in substance that he felt it would be a big mistake to buy less than the whole.

LAST REMAINING SITE

"An expert of many years experience in developing and maintaining public recreation centers in outdoor locations was a leader in the endorsement. He was K. P. Cecil, Columbian national forest supervisor, appearing as a private individual. He drew a forceful picture of the swift "bottling up" of recreation spots through private summer home ownership, as along the Washougal river, and pointed out that the general vicinity of the site along the Lewis river is the last remaining desirable water area in Clark county.

"He reminded the planning commission that the sites must not have only nice groves and open spaces but also water to drink as well as to play in and particularly must have ample room. The onrushing tide of public demand has overrun almost every suitable camp ground in prompt fashion, he said. But the proposed site has everything - location, ample water for drinking and cooking (through shallow wells, if necessary), desirable natural features of groves and level spaces, and sufficient room.

SELL CONCESSION PRIVILEGES

"He warned that expenses for upkeep are inevitable and expenses of development, including means of sanitation must be considered, but he said that quite possibly if enough land was secured to preclude the possibility of a clustering of hotdog stands around the edges of the property in convenient reach of the patrons a good bargain could be driven with someone to maintain and supervise the grounds in exchange for concession privileges.

"The discussion developed the fact that the allocation of \$15,550 of federal funds, which was made long ago and which was to be divided about \$12,000 - \$3,500 respectively for development of the recreation center and the Sandy swimming hole at Camas, may be withdrawn (apparently due to failure to get the project under way any sooner). It was the consensus however, that the county should buy the park site now regardless of development possibilities."

/At this point the county commissioners pointed out that lack of sufficient funds could be a handicap in buying so large an area unless they felt sure of general popular support/.

"The possibility that funds cannot be raised to complete the purchase found the audience in a fighting mood. Foster Hidden, R. S. Durkee, Cecil and others promptly declared that rather than see the project abandoned they would assist in a public subscription campaign, and offered to 'start the ball rolling' themselves if such action is necessary. The matter finally was left in the form of a resolution to the commissioners."

The situation had reached its climax as far as evidence of popular interest was concerned, and the commissioners went ahead to acquire the coveted land. On July 31, 1936 the Camas Post-Record reported:

"With a deed secured on the last parcel of land yesterday afternoon, work will be pushed in earnest on Clark county's new rural recreation project on the east fork of Lewis river at Lewisville, County Commissioner Charles Garber announced.

"A 120 acre section was purchased yesterday from John Banks of Portland to complete the /area/ where county residents can enjoy camping, picnicking and a dip in the cool waters of the river at one of the county's most scenic spots.

"A W.P.A. crew started Monday to slash and clear. The project will include clearing camp sites, erecting camp stoves and tables, providing for garbage disposal and otherwise preparing the center for the public.

"When all the present plans are carried out the county and the federal government will have spent nearly \$20,000 on the project."

As published descriptions of the embryo park at the period are lacking. The following entries in the diary of the present writer may have some general interest. The first of the pair is dated July 19, 1936 and is as follows: "Picnic at the new County recreation park near Lewisville. It contains 240 acres! We spent the afternoon picnicking with Mr. Charles Deako (the County Engineer), Mrs. Deako, and their young son, Richard.

Later another party of picnickers came and stayed a while. Mr. and Mrs. Skooglund. They stayed a couple of hours. We had a dandy time. /Story of the picnic dinner omitted/. Mr. Skooglund and I played ball for a while. The boys had their bathing suits and played in the water. I, too, had my first swim of the season. We saw several trees cut down by beavers - good-sized alders. The park is not yet developed, hence a fine, secluded place." It may be noted that the above took place about the time the WPA went to work at the park. The second entry is dated about a year later, July 4, 1937: "After church we went home. We discussed briefly whether we should eat dinner at home, or proceed immediately to the Pomona picnic at the Clark County Park at Lewisville. We chose the latter alternative. -- After our picnic dinner, we went to the new ball grounds and witnessed a ball game between Rock Creek and Dear Island granges. During the progress of the game we "visited" with folks of our acquaintance we found among the crowd. -- The score of the game: R.C.-13, D.I.-4 -- Lewisville park is being developed into an excellent camp and picnic grounds, what with the river, trees, trails, camp conveniences, etc. -- Fielding at the game was hampered by the unfinished state of the grounds."

The following record of the land transactions in connection with the park is based on the official records of the Board of County Commissioners:

The P. C. Axtell Tract. This tract was located in the southeast quarter of Section 22, Township 4 north, Range 2 east of the Willamette Meridian. The area embraced the entire quarter section with "four exceptions."

An option to buy was signed on May 8, 1936 "if money is provided for the development of a recreation center." The consideration was to be \$2,500 and the payment of the interest on a \$1,400 mortgage at six percent,

"if option is taken up." -- A deed was accepted from Mr. Axtell on June 29, 1936 and the county auditor ordered to make payment.

The J. C. Banks Tracts. One tract was the $W\frac{1}{2}$ of the $NW\frac{1}{4}$, the other the $NE\frac{1}{4}$ of the $NW\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 23, Township 4 north, Range 2 east of the Willamette Meridian, 120 acres in all.

The option to buy, dated May 15, 1936, was to be carried into effect "provided funds are forthcoming from W.P.A. for the development of the recreational area." The consideration was to be \$2,000. -- The deed from Mr. Banks was accepted on July 30, 1936 and \$2,000 paid.

The Herman J. Potter Tracts. June 10, 1936, Herman J. Potter in consideration of \$900, gave the county a deed for 8.6 acres in the $NE\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 22, Township 4 north, Range 2 east of the Willamette Meridian. An option was signed the same day for the purchase of a forty-three acre tract in the same quarter section; consideration to be \$1,100. The option was taken up on January 15, 1937 and \$900 /\$1,100 ?/ paid. This tract was the portion of that quarter section "lying east of the county road."

The James E. Pearce Tract. On March 25, 1938 for a consideration of \$250 the county commissioners received a deed for 0.16 acre of land in Section 22, Township 4 north, Range 2 east of the Willamette Meridian. This was the Lewisville Store Stockpile site.

Three exchanges of properties helped in rounding out the park. The first of these was with the Clark County Foundation for Scouting. The Scouts had acquired eighty acres from Mrs. Letha Green adjacent to the park property. There appeared to be advantageous reasons to both sides to trade land. Accordingly on June 18, 1937 the Commissioners signed a resolution to that effect with the Clark County Foundation for Scouting by

which they exchanged that portion of the $N\frac{1}{2}$ of the $NW\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 23, Township 4 north, Range 2 east lying south and east of the East Fork of the Lewis River for the $NW\frac{1}{4}$ of the $SW\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 22, of the same township and range lying south and east of the East Fork. Each parcel contained about 79 acres. The deeds were exchanged the same day.

The second trade was with E. L. Potter on July 21, 1938 by which the park area acquired 25.47 acres in Section 14, Township 4 north, range 2 east, and yielded to Potter 7.154 acres in Section 23.

The third trade came years later when a tract in Section 22, Township 4 north, range 2 east, was exchanged with ^{Roy}~~Ray~~ Elmer, on May 17, 1948.

Thus through the persistence of alert and forward-looking groups of citizens, followed by the purchase and intelligent exchanges of land, Lewisville Park came into being in the extent it has today, geographically speaking.

For almost two years after the WPA began the work of transforming the acquired lands into something like a real recreation center, there was no official caretaker. What regulations there were, if any, were carried out by WPA personnel, who had no authority to detail men for the purpose.

"SUPERINTENDENCY OF OSCAR HANSON --- June 1938 - Jan. 1941"

On June 13, 1938 the Columbian stated the park situation, as it then stood, in this fashion:

"MAN ENGAGED AS CARETAKER"

"Deciding that the county park on the Lewis river now requires the services of a full-time caretaker, due to its degree of development and the increasing use made of it, the county commissioners today engaged Oscar Hanson, Yacolt, as park superintendent.

"He will be retained during the summer months, according to present plans, and if arrangements can be made he will stay during most or all of the year to work at improving the park or to supervise other workmen.

"It was necessary to hire a supervisor, the officials explained, because the WPA, which has been developing the park, has no regulations which will permit use of a man or men in this particular capacity.

"Visitors to the county park also will find a new building added to the developments there, as a result of WPA work now being completed. The crew is erecting a rustic structure, of type similar to other developments in the park, which will be used to house concessions.

"Somewhat larger than the community kitchen, it is planned as a place where users of the park can secure conveniently milk, foodstuffs, candies, ice cream and soft drinks or other items commonly associated with picnic grounds.

"The county commissioners have not yet decided how the concessions will be operated or who will operate them. It was the intention originally to 'trade' some responsible person the concession privileges in return for his services as caretaker and park attendant.

"Whether this can be done or not, however, remains to be determined. It is pointed out that the caretaker could not run the concessions himself and at the same time be free to run here and there around the park as a superintendent should be."

On April 26, 1940 a resolution of the county commissioners created a park advisory board consisting of the judge of the superior court, the president of the Ministerial Association, and the Master of the Pomona Grange - these to appoint two others to serve for two year terms, except that at the first appointment one was to serve for a one year term. The members of the first board were Judge Charles W. Hall, Dr. Middlemass (of the Ministerial Association), Pomona Master J. R. Preble, Mrs. Joe LaLonde and

Mr. W. E. Peery. Mrs. Joe LaLonde was made chairman, and Rev. Stuart Goode, secretary. The advisory board functioned for some years, but a later board of commissioners abolished it.

In May 1938 the State Commission established, following a petition, a game preserve embracing Lewisville Park and the adjacent Scout camp.

A week after the appointment of Mr. Oscar Hanson as park superintendent, on June 20, 1938 rules for the park were adopted by the commissioners.

Under the superintendency of Mr. Hanson clearing of land and increasing of facilities went on as fast as available workers and funds would permit.

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Statement by Mr. Oscar Hanson,
First Superintendent of Lewisville Park, June 1938-January 1941, concerning those earlier days of the Park.

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Having, in June 1938, taken over as superintendent of the Lewisville Rural Recreation Park - that had grown, like "Topsy" without any real visible control - the operation and method of control of the park had to be worked out by myself and the Board of County Commissioners. The Board was headed by Mr. Ray B. Woolf, who in all respects is really the Grand daddy of the park for his zeal and interest and tireless work with others to provide a place of beauty and natural restfulness within our county for all to enjoy, without personal or political favor. I attempted to set the park up in a manner becoming to the faith in me of this man Woolf and Paul Schuman and Charles Garber, who comprised the County Board at the time.

First of all I found that rules and regulations of control must be adopted by the County Commissioners to make it possible to enforce proper control. My recommendations to the Board were accepted and passed by the board. The board was also advised that the park superintendent should be made a deputy sheriff, with full authority to act to enforce any rule or regulation or law. This was done with the cooperation of Sheriff Leland Morrow.

The reason for this control regulation was the fact that I found a few very stubborn folks who seemed to feel that the abuse of anything owned by the people is a given right of the individual; therefore I had a very unpleasant duty to perform. I hoped to do this through education and cooperation. Most people just have to be sold a bill of goods on their responsibility as park owners. It was a new venture for all of us, and we hoped that folks would respond without the need of force, which can be both costly and unpleasant to all.

After the Board of County Commissioners had appointed a park board to function with them and the superintendent, and to work out plans for proper development, this park board was found to be very effective in helping to form public opinion in support of the park projects. It was also hoped that this park venture could be kept out of the political spoils system, so generally used by short-sighted officials, sometimes at the expense of projects conceived with higher ideals than just to make a job for someone.

We found that with the constant use of the park facilities on hand, we had greatly underestimated the space and facilities needed to serve the public. Our roads were of dirt and gravel, and had to be oiled. More

tables, benches and sanitary facilities were a must. A water supply was needed, which meant wells and pumps. This project was set up and finished in 1939, so that we were able to provide the rest rooms and wash rooms. If we were, in any decent manner, to handle the growing popularity, the further development of the park was another must. Therefore the Commissioners used every means to expedite plans for its development and use throughout the year. As superintendent, I had the good services of Mr. William Paeth, who designed many of the buildings. These were built by W.P.A. workmen under the foremanship of Lynn Hull, a man deeply devoted to and interested in the development.

The scope and expanse of the park took the minds and efforts of many not of supervisory status to carry out. Most of all, I found that there does exist a spirit of building both for ourselves and future generations; and that this spirit was in the hearts and minds of the men assigned to this project by the W.P.A. To me this was a healthy attitude not always too evident in such projects. I feel that this work was well done and a source of pride to all who shared in it.

Through the cooperation of Lawrence Jones of Vancouver, representing director of the N.Y.A. in this district, we were able to bring many young men on a part time basis into our building project, and I wish to pay tribute to all of these that worked under my direction in making this a better area to live in. The tree climbing detail of the crew of 1940-1941 cleaned out all dead and hanging limbs from the wonderful trees of the park, for the safety of all visitors. The young men, 17 to 23 years of age, wired and plumbed; did much of the finishing work in placing the knotty cedar paneling; dug ditches; drove trucks; hauled gravel and sand; served as garbage detail;

as fire detail, shaping rocks for fire place and stoves - which were then placed by a W.P.A. stone mason. They cut brush and grass, cut fuel wood for fire rings and stoves, and did many other detail jobs that came up. N.Y.A. had a real part in the development of Lewisville Park.

The Northwestern Electric Power Company also came into the picture by bringing in a power line and erecting, without charge, a bank of electric stove plates in the center of one of the most important picnic areas. This service was and has been greatly appreciated by all users of the park. It has served a great need to many.

We set up hiking and bridle paths for those who wished to use them. We placed sign boards on sections A to J, for their easy location, with numbered tables, so that any responsible group could apply for and secure reservations for an area and tables to fit their group. This policy worked out well, since with the permit to use an area went the superintendent's instruction to the group for the proper use of it and the grounds in general. The group was given responsibility for the proper conduct of its members. Full cooperation and appreciation for the services rendered by the county were expressed by groups like the Grange, various fraternal organizations, churches, the Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls, the Boy Scouts and private groups of various kinds.

Baseball, soft ball, swimming and other sports have been a great attraction. Floating docks on the river, plus a diving tower, have been used extensively. Life guards are employed at the swimming hole. Sections have been roped off for beginners.

On Sundays we had the services of the Clark County W.P.A. band, conducted by bandmaster Al Baxter of Hockinson, for concerts. The band

stand near Section F was well placed for enjoying the music with a picnic dinner. This feature was well received by the public and created a lot of interest. The band was also used at ball games between such rivals as Battle Ground and Rock Creek, whose humdinger competition brought out many enthusiastic ball fans.

We set aside an area for overnite camping, controlled by permit, which presented little difficulty. Folks were very cooperative, and the service met a popular need.

Another very important function of the park has been to provide space and facilities for larger groups wishing to camp for a period of time, such as the Blue Birds, the Camp Fire Girls, the Girl Scouts and religious groups. An old farm on the south side of the river was purchased by the Board of County Commissioners. We developed that area for that type of camping. An old barn was repaired by putting in new sills and a floor. To the rear of it we built a kitchen with a lava rock stove oven. There was a dining room with a fire place, also used as an assembly hall. The tables were made so that they could be folded; benches were built. We built a few shelters for sleeping purposes, with fire rings outside. When there were larger groups, these erected tents to provide needed shelter. We named the area Camp Woo-Gar-Shu in honor of the Board of County Commissioners that authorized the acquisition of the Lewisville Rural recreational Park, namely Mr. Ray B. Woolf, Mr. Charles Garber and Mr. Paul Schumann.

The largest group using Camp Woo-Gar-Schu was the Southwest Washington Conference of the Presbyterian Church. They used it each summer, one session for girls, one for boys. When the Girl Scouts used the camp they would rename it Camp Julianna.

Religious services were conducted at Lewisville Park during the summer and fall seasons. Section A was commonly used. A fireplace and stove made out of lava rock were constructed. These were covered by a Hanson shelter with benches worked into the rising ground, thus forming something like a natural amphitheater. This facility was extensively used, even for weddings. One wedding of particular interest was performed for a traveler from Washington, D. C. He came into the park one evening seeking Rev. Phipps of Camas, who, by the way, was at Camp Woo-Gar-Schu helping in the Conference Camp detail. This man, who wished to have Rev. Phipps because he was a Master Mason, perform the wedding ceremony, wanted to know if I could help him. Section A was selected for the service; a fire was built in the fireplace; after which Ray Woolf and family, and myself and family acted as witnesses. It was a very impressive ceremony in an unforgettable setting - fire light, heavenly stars, the sound of the running waters of Lewis River, all surrounded by the wonderful tall fir trees and fine fraternal and personal friends.

Lewisville Park was developed with the aid of many fine people. Among these were Charles Deako, Clark County Engineer, and his staff, which included Mr. Bernard Morris and Bije Smith; there were many effective groups headed by the Clark County Ministerial Association, Dr. Middlemass, chairman; Rev. Phipps of Camas; and many others I cannot recall. There were service clubs like Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions; the Chamber of Commerce; and fraternal groups whose main help was in sustaining the efforts of the County Board to make good this radical change in which the county would provide such extensive recreational facilities. There were Messrs. Campbell, Bachman and Rieger of the Evening Columbian educating the public in its responsibility

for the proper use of the park to the end that it might be useful to its patrons and so help maintain it for future generations to enjoy.

In 1940, being in need of a flag pole for the grounds, we toured our own forest and finally found what we sought and felled a tree. When mounted on a good sturdy base this pole measured 85 feet in length. On this pole we flew an American flag, 12' x 24', that really looked grand and caught the eye of all.

The Lewisville Rural Recreational Park was dedicated to the service of mankind by Mr. Don Abel of Chehalis, Washington, Regional W.P.A. Director. A full representation of the Board of County Commissioners and of the Park Board took part in the very impressive service. Personal pride in the development to date of the park was freely expressed by the several thousands of Clark County citizens who also attended.

As a note of personal interest we made an official count of the park use in the summer of 1941. The record shows an attendance of 43,000 people during the season.

My most sincere hope is that what has been accomplished so far will be continued, and that future expansion to meet the demands of the public for more space will be in keeping with the ability to conserve the natural beauty of the park. The first County Board and Park Board and all that helped so greatly in its inception and development were all agreed on one paramount objective - TO KEEP THE PARK AS FAR AS POSSIBLE IN ITS NATURAL STATE AND CLEAN. By all possible means it must be kept from becoming a commercial enterprise. Set no fee for the privilege of entrance. Help our people to help themselves by maintaining perpetually this park, so close to many homes, for enjoyable outings.

I am happy and proud to have had a small part in the development of this Recreational Area as a service to the people of Clark County.

Vancouver, Washington, April 23, 1956.

Oscar L. Hanson

SUPERINTENDENCY OF JOHN E. ARGIANAS
Jan. 1941- May 1945

The personnel of the board of county commissioners changed in January 1941, and John E. Argianas was appointed park superintendent to succeed Mr. Hanson. Concerning this change the Columbian on January 14, 1941, stated: "Argianas will be assisted by a member of his family who is a nurse, and the superintendent and his family will reside in the park, as did Hanson and his family, in order to have someone present and in charge of the grounds at all times. The new superintendent is a Vancouver resident, and was a candidate for nomination as county commissioner in 1938."

For a while at least activity at the park continued about as before. A concrete septic tank was provided. H. C. Woodward was given concession rights for the summer of 1941, but this was soon cancelled and the concession given to Robert R. Ray. It was in October 1941 that the final exchange of property, already noted, with Grover Bennett took place. The National Youth Administration, which had been furnishing help for maintenance of the park up to 1941, ceased to continue the service, making necessary an emergency appropriation "for salaries and wages" in May 1941.

Then came our entry into World War II with its radical changes in the customary habits and activities. Lewisville Park in company with many other civic enterprises of peace time suffered at least partial eclipse.

The records available to the writer are quite silent on the subject for the year 1942. Obviously this is due to several reasons, such as the war production, the feverish drafting of manpower to meet mortal threats from mighty enemies; the departure of thousands of youth for military training camps, then to the battle-fronts; rationing, especially of gasoline and tires, and so forth. People then did the very minimum of travel for recreation.

In 1943 Commissioner Lewis Shattuck was placed in charge of parks and fairgrounds. The salary of Superintendent Argianas was increased from \$145 to \$165 per month and of laborers from \$5.50 to \$6.50 per day. A commissioners' resolution granted the Quartermasters Unit Training Center of Vancouver Barracks the "use of Lewisville Park for proper and necessary army bivouac purposes." That is about all the data for 1943. Again in 1944 there is a dearth of information relative to what was taking place at the park. In the spring of 1945, as the war in Europe was coming to a close, there came to the County commissioners several communications "requesting certain improvements in the park."

SUPERINTENDENCY OF OTTO G. BEHRENS.
May 1945- Jan. 1949.

With the end of the war and its restrictions, renewed interest centered on Lewisville Park. Otto G. Behrens of Vancouver succeeded Mr. Argianas as superintendent on June 1, 1945. Concerning his qualifications the Columbian of May 22, 1945 said: "Park work will not be new to Behrens who served for 15 months as grounds supervisor for the Vancouver Housing authority and prior to that was park superintendent of Park Hill

cemetery from 1939 to 1943." Commissioner A. N. Stanley was then in charge of parks and fairgrounds.

The following items are drawn from the commissioners' proceeding in the months following:

Wages of labor at the park were adjusted from \$6.50 per day to \$0.90 per hour on June 1, 1945.

During the autumn of 1945 letters of appreciation began coming in from various sources to the commissioners. This was, of course, very indicative of progress being made at the park.

On October 19, 1945 the budgets of janitor's supplies, truck maintenance, building repairs, building equipment, repairs, and miscellaneous were combined under the heading of Operation and Maintenance.

On June 3, 1946 the County Health Department reported on the condition of the park water supply, with instructions. The minutes add: "Instructions will be followed as nearly as possible."

In the fall of 1946 contracts were let for a deep well at the park "cost to be \$11.00 per foot for ten inch casing, supply to be 200 gallons per minute"; and for a deep well pump to cost \$1947. The former contract went to R. J. Strasser, the latter to the Spencer Machine Company.

On February 27, 1948 Orren A. Kern was granted the park concession.

An order abandoning the park road as part of the county road system was made on October 18, 1948.

A much more complete picture of what was happening at Lewisville Park in the years following 1945 can be had from an article in the Columbian of July 4, 1947, written by Jessie Rody, reproduced in full below:

"A program of improvement with the ultimate goal of making Clark county's beautiful Lewisville park one of the finest summer playgrounds in the northwest can be said to have made much progress this season. With the installation of additional amusement facilities for both adults and children, modernizing of the swimming pool and a new sanitary water supply, family groups and picnickers are assured long-to-be-remembered pleasures in this wooded area 17 miles northeast of Vancouver.

"In a natural wonderland of stately pines, ferns and other native greenery, the visitor to this lovely spot leaves the cares and annoyances of every-day living behind when he enters the gates of the deeply-shaded and coolly peaceful grounds.

"The park, which happens to be under the jurisdiction of A. N. Stanley, chairman of the board of county commissioners, has undergone a veritable 'face lifting' in the last few years, under that individual's four-year plan launched in 1945 in order that 'the adults of Clark county and their children might have an ideal vacation spot'.

LOCAL RESIDENTS PROTECTED

"Although the park is open to all comers, reservations can be made only by residents of the county. This step was taken when it was discovered that crowds from other counties were reserving sections in the park to the exclusion of the citizens of Clark county for whom the area was originally established.

"Funds amounting to \$1,700 were expended this summer to purchase equipment for two playgrounds with rows of swings, sliding boards, teeter-totters, overhead climbing ladders and several horizontal bars available for the pleasure of children visiting the park.

'HOLE' IMPROVED

"A new float and diving board have been installed at the swimming 'hole', one of the most picturesque spots in the park, where the Lewis river flows quietly through low hanging boughs to offer sanctuary from torrid summer days.

"Another innovation is the baseball diamond recently completed with grass infield and outfield which is laid out in accordance with specifications of professional diamonds. Games are scheduled here each Saturday and Sunday.

"A soft-ball field is ready for players who prefer this type of game and croquet grounds will be ready for devotees of that sport as soon as the newly planted grass is mature enough to be walked on.

"Those who prefer less strenuous exercise may indulge in a quiet game of horseshoes, in improved pits which were formerly only pegs in the ground.

NEW WELL DUG

"A new well was sunk at the park last fall, with the installation completed this spring. The 130-gallon-per-minute automatic water system utilized a thousand-gallon pressure tank with the water piped across to the Girl Scout camp on the south side of the river.

"Water is now available in section H, formerly supplied by a small open spring which was frowned upon by the health department, and in addition is piped to the ball diamond and other parts of the park.

WADING POOL FIXED

"The wading pool for smaller children, adjacent to section E, has been reclaimed from the 'mud hole' stage to a clear body of water where the little folks can splash safely. The bottom is now being filled with sand and gravel to keep it clear.

"The grounds at the park are beautifully kept up, the closely cropped grass giving the appearance of a well-tended lawn. Newly purchased equipment makes this possible, a business-like motor driven little 'gadget' being used to clear away the heavy growth beneath the trees in the more heavily wooded areas replacing the man-wielded and less practical scythes of prior years.

"The old tool-house which was destroyed in the storm of December /4/, 1945, has been rebuilt and restrooms, also demolished that year, have been reconstructed by park forces.

WOOD SUPPLY SHRINKS

"The park is lighted by electricity throughout and free wood is available to all although the latter convenience may have to be curtailed this summer, according to Commissioner Stanley, due to the fact that wood is becoming a little more scarce. He has urged those building fires to use only the amount of wood actually needed and guard against waste in order to stretch the supply.

"Stoves are placed at vantage points throughout the park for those who prefer out-of-door cooking and covered stoves are available in four sections of the park, some of them huge affairs where large parties can assemble and prepare their meals together. An added attraction to tired business men or women who may view with alarm the thought of carrying wood and building a fire, is the 16-unit hot plate where, by snapping a switch, a dish may be prepared or hamburgers cooked over electricity with all the comforts of home. These facilities are supplied through the courtesy of the Northwest Electric company which also furnishes the current consumed.

MORE THINGS PLANNED

"Commissioner Stanley, who was assigned to the park in May, 1945, has declared that his program for park improvement has not yet ended. He plans to install a set of double tennis courts for next summer and to extend the water system to assure fire protection throughout the park.

"During the hot weather of last summer and the year before, it nearly became necessary to close the park which became tinder dry. The commissioner intends to have water available for quelling chance blazes as well as to better the water facilities in outlying sections.

"Otto Behrens, who is superintendent of the park, was appointed by the board in June, 1945. He lives in the superintendent's cottage at the entrance to the park where first aid facilities may be obtained. Behrens has two regular men to assist him in the upkeep of the grounds and two extra workers who are employed during the summer months.

MORE MONEY USED

"Stanley who declares that 'no other spot in this part of the country has anything on Lewisville park', asked for -and got- an increased budget for 1947 with which to make his improvements.

"Totaling \$24,398, the sum of \$12,500 was expended for capital outlay including improvements to the play grounds, wading pools, tables, stoves, and a recently built and charming rustic bridge leading to the island. Of that amount, \$2,000 went for rest rooms, \$1,500 for

the tractor and attachments, \$5,000 for the new water supply, and \$2,500 for road construction on the south side of the park.

"Other budget items are salaries, \$9,648; office expenses, \$75; office supplies, \$50; lights and electricity, \$100; 'phone, \$25; minor tools and equipment, \$75; gas and oil, \$300; building repair and painting, \$1,000; building equipment, \$75; janitors supplies, \$100; equipment repairs, gas and oil, \$350.

"Although the park is uncluttered by numerous rules and regulations, the few which are set up are firmly and rigidly enforced, the principal one applying to drinking intoxicating liquor on the property.

NO DRINKING

"This is absolutely taboo, Commissioner Stanley holding fast to his contention that 'a public park should be free of the things that go with drinking.' Hence tipplers and persons showing the effects of previous drinks are ushered from the area.

"A second rule which is a 'must' regardless of persons, is the 10:30 o'clock closure. ----"

SUPERINTENDENCY OF CHARLES LESLIE Jan. 1949 - Mar. 1953

Once more the personnel of the county commission changed in January 1949, bringing about the appointment of a new park superintendent in the person of Charles Leslie. During Mr. Leslie's tenure the work of improving park facilities went on progressively, and popular use of these continued to increase during the months of suitable weather.

Again a few items drawn from the commissioners' minutes of the time will indicate happenings relative to the park "set-up." The very first session of the new board witnessed a discussion as to whether a park advisory board ought to be re-established. Commissioner Claude Bone

asked for an expression of public opinion in the form of letters. This was on January 10, 1949. Among the responses came a series of resolutions from Pomona Grange and some of the subordinate Granges, all urging reactivation. Nothing immediate appears to have grown out of these, and it was August 15, 1952 before a "Park Recreation Board" consisting of seven members, the county school superintendent and six persons appointed by the commissioners, was decreed.

The establishment of a Boy Scout camp adjacent had been an important by-product of the earliest days of the park itself. Some years later the Girl Scouts followed the example and established Camp Julianna, also adjacent to the park. At first facilities allowed only troop camping at the site. But on January 9, 1950 the commissioners granted the Girl Scouts permission "to construct a 16' x 16' building in the park for their purposes only in connection with the camping activities of the Girl Scouts. Building to be constructed and maintained by Girl Scouts." On May 11 of the same year the minutes say the "Board met with representatives of Girl Scout camp in regard to electric service, to building, graveling road and dredging river for swimming."

The concern of the commissioners and the park authorities brought prompt fruit, so that we may read in the Columbian of July 16, 1952 the following:

"The first session of Camp Julianna, the Girl Scout permanent camp on the Lewis river at Lewisville Park, opened this week with a full enrollment of 54 girls and a well-trained staff in charge---. Under the professional leadership of Miss Jane Abbott, Columbia River area director, the camp will hold four one-week sessions. ---Swimming is perhaps the most popular activity at Camp Julianna.---In addition to swimming,

many hikes and cook-outs are planned as well as activities in the fields of dramatics, nature, handcrafts and badge work. Every evening there is a campfire circle with group singing under the stars.--- Although troop camping has been held for several years at Camp Julianna, this is the first time since the Girl Scouts of Clark and Skamania Counties have been an area council that they have been able to attend a permanent camp."

Concessionaires changed from time to time during Leslie's superintendency. The concession was again awarded to Orren Kern on March 4, 1949; on February 27, 1950 and again on April 2, 1951 it was awarded to Mr. and Mrs. Lindy Albrici "on a five percent commission basis"; and on June 2, 1952 it went to Donald Graber. On February 20, 1953 Steve Lerouge took over "with rental to be five percent of gross sales of soft drinks, lunches, ice cream and similar confection and fifteen percent of the gross sale of pop corn."

On May 23, 1952 a fifteen mile per hour speed limit was set on roads in the park.

Toward the end of March 1953 Mr. Leslie turned in his resignation to the county commissioners, for "reasons of health" to be effective on April 1. Mr. Woolf, the board chairman, is quoted in the Columbian of March 24, 1953 as saying that the resignation was accepted with regret, and that the retiring superintendent was leaving the county playground in excellent shape.

Two days later the Columbian published the following article:

"Two new buildings have been erected at Lewisville Park during the past fall and winter and the old concession stand has been remodeled to house some seven hundred persons, Charles Leslie, retiring park superintendent has announced.

"All partitions have been removed from the concession building, making additional space available, and a stove and sink have been installed. A fireplace previously built may still be used by visitors to the park.

"A new structure has been completed near the ball field which is aimed to house about 250 under its roof.---. A stove and running water has been installed there, too, Leslie said. This building has been constructed of logs, similar to the original concession stand. Reservations for use of these buildings must be made in advance, the park head disclosed.

"A second concession stand has been erected near the tennis court and many new tables have been set up throughout the park,---. Other improvements in the park include the replacement of the outside logs of the caretaker's home and of the logs in front of the monument near the entrance of the park.

"The entrance sign also has been improved with a fresh coat of paint."

SUPERINTENDENCY OF J. LAWRENCE PHILLIPS

Apr. 1, 1953 -

J. Lawrence Phillips was appointed to replace Charles Leslie as superintendent of Lewisville Park. He took over the position on April 1, 1953. At the time of his appointment Mr. Phillips was a resident of Washougal, 40 years old, a watchmaker by trade, married, with two children.

Three articles from the Columbian will suffice to trace the story of Lewisville Park during Phillips' superintendency through 1954, the first from the issue of July 6, 1953:

PARK CROWD BIG, ORDERLY

"Lewisville Park Superintendent Larry Phillips has only words of praise for the near-record crowd which swarmed into the park Saturday to celebrate the Fourth of July.

"Phillips reported that from 9,000 to 10,000 people visited the park during the Fourth, and approximately 3,000 cars were admitted.

" 'If it wasn't the largest crowd on record, then it was certainly close to it,' Phillips observed.

ON GOOD BEHAVIOR

"Praising the crowd's behavior, Phillips said that not even an hour without water service in the afternoon could upset the general good humor. He said an interruption of electric power service caused the temporary shutdown.

"Park facilities were quite overcrowded, he said, however families displayed a praiseworthy cooperative spirit by quickly clearing their picnic tables as soon as they were through so that others could use them.

"Phillips cited also the fact that there were few instances of littering up the grounds. Although trash cans were quickly filled, he said the crowd stacked the refuse neatly around the cans.

NO FIRECRACKERS

"Only first aid injuries were reported during the day, Phillips said.

" 'Not one firecracker was heard,' he added.

"Summing up his appreciation, the park superintendent said: 'I just want to thank those who celebrated the Fourth here for their wonderful attitude.'

"His sentiments were echoed by George Addich, deputy sheriff who was on duty at the park Saturday.

" 'I've never seen so large a crowd behave so well,' said Deputy Addich, speaking from years of experience."

From the Columbian of April 30, 1954:

LEWISVILLE PARK READY FOR PICNICS

"Lewisville Park will operate under its summer schedule beginning Saturday, the park superintendent, Larry Phillips, has announced.

"This means that Clark County's summer recreation spot will be open from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. each day. During the fall and winter months, the hours are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"Numerous improvements have been made in readiness for the summer season, Phillips said. Addition of three new cook stoves brings to a total of 30 the number of stoves available to picnickers as well as 16 hot plates. There are also five fireplaces for those who prefer to prepare their food over an open blaze.

"The tennis court has been rewired and new nets installed and an extensive program of clearing has been under way, the park superintendent stated.

"Reservations for groups may be made for Clark County residents by calling the superintendent, Underhill, 6-3309. Although the park is open to all who wish to use it, reservations are not accepted from out-of-county citizens—.

"The large section E is open to all and no reservation may be made for this area. Twenty-five hundred visitors can be accommodated in this particular part of the park.

"The many tables in the park can seat upwards of 5,000 persons."

The third article from the Columbian tells of the celebration of the Fourth of July at the park in 1954. The article is dated July 5, 1954.

LEWISVILLE PARK IS FULL

"BATTLE GROUND - An estimated crowd of 8,000 spent a safe and sane Fourth of July in Lewisville Park Sunday.

"Superintendent Larry Phillips said the crowd was smaller than expected, and 2,000 less than the 10,000 who celebrated Independence day in the park last year.

"He said 4,000 cars were counted officially on the park grounds, and vehicles were lined up at 6:30 a.m. awaiting the 7 o'clock opening.

"No accidents or injuries were reported to Phillips, who praised the crowd's orderly and cooperative nature. He and his staff did reunite five lost children with their respective parents during the day.

"Phillips noted that many park patrons who were first to enter the park when it opened, were last to leave just before the gates were swung shut at 10:30 p.m.

"Although cars were reported lining up at 6:30 o'clock this /Monday/ morning, Phillips said he expects a crowd today only one third as large as yesterday's."

AFTER WORD

The following facts about Lewisville Park may be of interest:

It is one of the very largest county parks in the entire country. Being a county park, it is locally governed and managed by people personally much interested in its maintenance and improvement.

Its location is some distance from any main artery of travel, which gives it a pleasing isolation from the often raucous bustle of commerce; yet it is close enough to centers of population to make it readily within reach for a full day's outing.

While it lies at almost the geographical center of the county, and so is easily available over good roads from every direction, however rural, yet its peculiar terrain makes it sufficiently remote from either urban or closely pressing cultivated lands to keep the flavor of its natural state, even when hundreds are there.

The absolute ban on intoxicants of any kind is a prime guarantee that the good order for which the park is noted will be unbroken to the well-being of its guests.

Thus, Lewisville Park justifies our pride by giving a perpetual carefree retreat for our home folks, and to Clark County its happy privilege of "rolling out the welcome carpet" to its neighbors from every side, also to tourists from everywhere.

Germinated in the middle 'thirties amid the decaying debris from the violently shaken economic structure; nurtured by men and women devoted to community betterment, who were not turned aside either by personal ambition or other consideration, Lewisville Park took firm root and has grown into the beneficent flower it is today. . May its cooling shades and gently flowing stream temper our summers from year to year. May those who have made this possible be ever gratefully remembered!

FINIS.

