

Fleetwood Area Historical Society Newsletter

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In This Issue:

- The Fleetwood ParkPage 1-4

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The board of directors continues discussion and planning for the book of historic photos we are hoping to get published in celebration of Fleetwood's 150th anniversary in 2023. We are very fortunate to have the computer expertise of James Weber who has offered to help us design the book and work with us to improve the clarity of photos where needed.

I have compiled a collection of about 200 photos which have been scanned and captions are being worked on for those we select to publish. It is turning out to be a big project.

We have recently received a collection of items from the estate of Ronald Noll, son of Walter H. Noll, former Dodge/Plymouth dealer in Fleetwood. Some photos may find their way to Facebook.

I have recently compiled a listing of all the articles which Bob Knoll has written for the society newsletter since our founding in 1991. There is much detailed historic data in these articles and we intend to add the listing of titles to our web site. People interested in information from these articles can request copies from the Society at no cost.

Please remember that, as usual, we will not be having membership meetings or programs during the winter months of January, February and March. They will resume in April.

*With warm regards,
Bill Strause*

THE FLEETWOOD COMMUNITY PARK *Past and Present*

Sentiment for a Fleetwood Community Park had been discussed as far back as the 1920s when the former Fleetwood Real Estate Co. asked the borough to annex land they owned west of the borough. This plan was never implemented, but then in 1946, Otto and Edna Nygaard, who were developing a former farm west of the borough into residential homes sites, made an offer of a large tract of land, provided that the entire property would be annexed to the borough. With a cost of \$1,000 for legal fees and surveys, the plan was about to fail when the Fleetwood Lions Club came forward with a gift of the money.

When the survey was made of the land from Nygaard, it was found that it did not extend to the creek (then called Clover Creek), for quite a distance along the east side. This land was owned by Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Rauch. In order to see the park become a reality, the Rauch's offered the land as a gift to the borough.

By 1948 a proposed plan of the park was drawn up by the borough's engineering firm and a Park Commission was formed by the town council.

The concept of a park was accepted with much enthusiasm by several civic

organizations with the promise of helping to turn the meadowland into a park.

Before long the Fleetwood Grange had organized a group to start beautifying the rough ground by raking and removing stones and debris.

As the park began to take shape, a group called "Service Mothers, Wives and Sisters" along with the Fleetwood Woman's Club raised funds to assure that the area would remember the sacrifices made during the war, through a war memorial and flag pole erected in the park. The memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day, 1950. Its inscription reads: "To the youth of Fleetwood who gave the supreme sacrifice and honoring all those who served in World War II.

In 1952 a large pavilion was erected by the Fleetwood Lion's Club who later also built a shuffleboard court near the pavilion.

The idea of a community swimming pool was brought to borough council in 1958 and many civic organizations joined forces to offer support and to help raise funds. Land was acquired and construction began in 1960 with dedication and official opening on May 11, 1961. The pool has proven to be a very popular attraction.

During this same time period, the Fleetwood Jaycees had taken up the project of a concession stand in the park. Rough plans were drawn up for the building which was constructed using mostly volunteer labor. It was dedicated in 1961 at a cost of \$2900. A few years later the Fleetwood Jaycees also built a third pavilion in the park.

Two pedestrian bridges were erected through funds provided by the Fleetwood Woman's Club.

The Fleetwood Fish and Game Association was also active in the community park, constructing temporary dams in the Willow Creek each year in which to stock trout for the purpose of offering fishing rodeos for area children.

Then in 1976, at the urging of the Fleetwood Fish and Game Association, the borough council obtained funds from Project 70 in order to buy additional land for the construction of a pond for fishing and ice skating. The Fish and Game Association paid for the pond construction which has since been used annually for fishing rodeos each Spring and is available for ice skating. The Walnuttown Fish and Game Assn. has joined in financing and running the fishing rodeos.

Recognizing a need for some shelter for ice skaters on the pond, in 1984 the borough organized a Gazebo project using lumber cut from trees harvested in the borough's water shed area. Borough employees constructed the gazebo adjacent to the pond at minimal cost to the borough. Several years later, the borough employees built a restroom/storage building near the pond.

Park improvements continued when, in 1987, the Fleetwood Lion's Club took on the major project of erecting a band shell in the park. With help from other organizations, the band shell was erected in 1987 along with improved aluminum seats for spectators.



"Construction of the Bandshell"

Following the death in 2012 of Gary Ebeling, a long-time Mayor and activist in several civic organizations, a fitness path was

constructed in the park in his honor. The Fleetwood Rotary Club, the Lion's Club and several others provided funds for paving as well as exercise features along the path. At about that same time, grant money was received to provide new and improved playground equipment. This equipment brings excited children to the park whenever weather permits.

The Fleetwood Rotary Club also provided benches in the park and small shade pavilions in the swimming pool area.

In 2017 the borough was able to secure a matching-fund grant for the purpose of erecting a heated restroom building to serve the community park. Following completion, the bathrooms were removed from the concession stand and that room was used to provide much-needed storage space in the concession stand.

In addition to the community park on the west end of the borough, council has also developed a smaller Locust Street Park to serve the east side of the community. And Eagle Scout project by James Duca recently added a "Ga-Ga Pit" in the Locust St. Park to supplement other equipment there.



"Locust Street Park"

A small triangle of land off of Fleetwood Avenue is also being improved into a scenic

park area. The Fleetwood Recreation Board will be erecting a clock tower in honor of those serving in wars beyond World War II. An Eagle Scout project by Jaden Klemmer will install a flag pole to honor first responders.

The elements have not been kind to the Fleetwood Community Park with major flooding in 2019 which destroyed the pedestrian bridge at the west Arch St. entrance and caused major damage to the creek bed. Shortly thereafter, the band shell had to be razed due to deterioration from the elements.



"Demolition of the Bandshell"

The borough council has responded with applications for grants to assist in repairs. With help from Senator Judy Schwank, a grant for more than \$132,000 was recently received for replacement of the band shell. A second grant has been applied for to finance replacement of the pedestrian bridge. Application has been made for a permit from the PA Dept of Environmental Protection to repair damage to the creek bed. Unfortunately, grant funding is a lengthy process.

Fleetwood has developed its parks into beautiful and popular sites, visited by thousands at carnivals, car shows and other events as well as daily use by many for exercise, sports and relaxation. Pavilions are used heavily for summer picnics.

continued on page 4

The parks continue to be supported and improved by local civic organizations as well as by a government which recognizes the major asset these parks represent.

More additions and improvements will surely follow in the future of the Fleetwood Parks.

Fleetwood Area Historical Society

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