

Trolley Times

North Slope Historic District Inc. May 2020
501(c)(3) Organization Volume 94

MAY PROGRAM CANCELED DUE TO VIRUS

The Board of Directors of NSHD, Inc. has decided to cancel the May program due to restrictions of the current corona virus epidemic. The Board is sure that you will understand the need to cancel the program - we must not congregate in a large group at this time of social distancing. The August newsletter will let you know if we can hold a general meeting then.

A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE NSHD

Get the kids out and enjoy a walk in your historic neighborhood

Download your very own walking tour of the North Slope Historic District. There are 25 houses highlighted in this report. Split it up and make several smaller walking tours. Select houses near you and start there. Our homes have been lived in by many prominent Tacomans of the past.

tacomannorthslope.org/pdf/NorthSlopeWalkingTourSummer2008.pdf

NSHD BEAUTIFICATION CHAIR NEEDED

The NSHD Beautification Chair, Geoff Corso, needs someone to mentor this year who is interested in leading the committee. The NSHD by-laws require committee chairs to join the NSHD Board of Directors. Board members are required to attend eight meetings annually - four board meetings and four neighborhood meetings.

The committee has also been co-hosting an *Annual Neighborhood Clean-Up* with the city at Jason Lee School, reserving use of the school parking lot for the day, recruiting volunteers with pickup trucks to help neighbors transport their refuse to the school, helping neighbors transfer their refuse from their vehicle into dumpsters, and providing lunch for approximately 30 people involved in the cleanup.

Committee chairs have a lot of leeway in planning how their committee contributes to the mission of the North Slope Historic District, Inc. In the past, the Beautification Committee has conducted litter patrols in the city right-of-way throughout the district. The committee has also won city grants to fund projects including landscaping traffic circles and the North Slope Historic District Park, removing stumps from parking strips, and ordering and planting trees in parking strips.

Please contact Geoff if you are interested in serving as Beautification Chair at 253-627-4408.

Wedge Historic District

Ross Buffington

Did you know that the City of Tacoma has a second residential historic district just across Division Avenue from the North Slope? As our name implies, the Wedge is the triangular-shaped area bounded by S. M Street on the east, Division Avenue on the north, and Sixth Avenue on the South. Its apex is Memo's Mexican restaurant.

The Wedge Historic District was created in direct response to MultiCare's 2006 purchase and demolition of the First United Methodist church at S. 5th St. and MLK.

At the time, MultiCare already owned four residences in the Wedge which were slated to be torn down and the property used as a parking lot. MultiCare was developing plans to purchase additional housing in the neighborhood. Wedge residents petitioned the City to create the historic district in 2008 as a means of ensuring the integrity of our neighborhood's historic characteristics. The City created the district in 2011 and it was added to the State and National Register of Historic places in

2016 (with great assistance from various North Slope residents).

Early in Tacoma's history, trolley lines

along both Sixth Avenue and Division made the Wedge a desirable place for a variety of professionals, laborers, and merchants. Downtown, Old Town, Pt. Defiance and other parts of Tacoma were easily accessible by trolley.

The oldest surviving houses in the Wedge are 411 S. M St. (built in 1890) and 413 (built in 1892). Until recently, these houses had fallen into disrepair but 413 has now been renovated and the renovation of 411 is pending. Additionally, MultiCare has recently

abandoned its plans to expand into the Wedge neighborhood and has donated its four residences



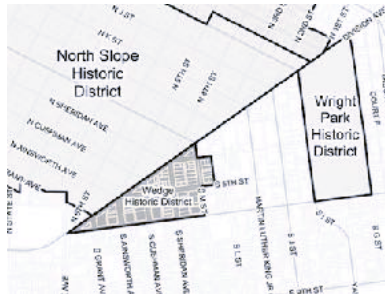
along S. M St. to Habitat for Humanity. Habitat is currently fixing up the houses to sell at market rates and will use the proceeds to support their program of housing those in need.

The majority of the 61 houses in the Wedge were built in the early 1900's with a few more dating from the 1920's. The predominant architecture is Bungalow/Cottage but there are also Victorian, Craftsman, and Foursquare houses. A Chalet style house is located at 1318 Division. The Wedge also includes several apartments and the Trinity Presbyterian Church along Sixth Avenue. The current Salvation Army facility was formally the New Yorker Café, a key jazz spot in Tacoma.

The home of Andrew Titlow (an early Tacoma attorney and banker) at 410 S. Sheridan Ave. once rested on the entire block and was surrounded by fruit orchards. Frank and Ethel Mars started the Mars candy company in their house at 504 S. Ainsworth. Other houses in the area were designed and built by Tacoma pioneers Frederick Heath, Silas Nelsen, and Edward Hill.

Our historic status has served us well in the Wedge. Residents have enthusiastically embraced the City's historic preservation standards and the historic character of the neighborhood is safe. A self-directed walking tour of the Wedge is available at:

<https://cms.cityoftacoma.org/planning/historic-preservation/walking-tours/wedge-district.pdf>



We Do Love Our New Home in Our Old House!

Shelley Wilkinson

My husband and I are relatively new to the neighborhood, buying our house, which we have named "Old Blue," in August of 2019. We signed papers on our second wedding anniversary, finalizing the purchase of what is our dream home - a light blue 1903 American Foursquare, complete with the wrap around porch, columns and historical plaque marking the front door.



We had been searching for quite a while and noticed the difference between the caliber of houses in our prior neighborhood and the North Slope Historic District - the styles of homes, the craftsmanship, and the front porches! And neighbors who have the same pride in ownership that we do.

As with any new living space, we got to work on the interior, making it our own as winter set in. We continue to fall in love with the tall ceilings, wide hallways, and pocket doors. We are lucky in that every piece of hardware is original to the home and perfectly matches each other. We giggle when we give our family and friends tours, pointing out the original wallpaper that was left inside each closet, and explain that picture rail has an actual purpose.

The sunshine this March and implementation of social distancing allowed for time outside. The prior owner had left various outdoor rugs that were in solid condition at the base of each stair case leading up to the porch. We chose to use them as-is until we started our projects, which included ripping out many hedges that flanked the front walkway. This was messy work and dirt was flying.

It was time to lift up some rugs so they could be cleaned and start fresh.

We started researching the history of our home after we toured it, and thanks to those who came before us, it was not very difficult to find information on the builder. In fact, I decided to take an excerpt from "History of the Puget Sound Country" Vol. II and have it printed onto canvas so that those who visit our front "parlor" can read a brief glimpse of the house history. The book gives in great detail the life story of *J.F Hopkins, a prominent druggist in our area who had the home built in 1903.*

I yanked up the large rug that had pieces of moss growing into it, disappointed that the removal of the rug would require a good pressure washing of the surrounding area. I noticed the faintest trace of a letter stamped into the concrete that had been covered by the rug. I became

excited, calling my husband over to verify that, in fact, we were

looking at the name of our builder J.F. Hopkins, etched into the concrete.



How many years had that rug been in place? How many families who had occupied our house walked over this etching, unbeknownst to them, to reach the front door? I pressure washed the next day, the name becoming more and more visible as the spring sunshine dried away the moisture. Due to the heavy grime I was washing away, I wouldn't be surprised if it had been 50+ years since it had last been cleaned, if ever.

This is why we love our historic home and the neighborhood it belongs to. New-builds don't give you many surprises, and the walls don't tell stories. In turn, our new neighbors have the same passions as we do and they celebrated with us that we had made such a neat and unexpected find. The North Slope Historic District has given us a dreamy welcome and we are happy to call it our home.

FROM THE EDITOR...

LET'S MAKE CUSHMAN STATION A COMMUNITY CENTER

The historic Cushman Substation, a relic of the beginning of Tacoma Power and Light, off North 21st and Adams Streets, will soon be declared surplus by Tacoma Public Utilities. So, Tacomans will have a once in a lifetime opportunity to help decide its future purpose because the city will soon be holding public workshops to get the community's ideas.

The North End Neighborhood Council is proposing that the two buildings, the large one on N. 19th and the small one on North Adams, be converted to a community gathering place called Cushman Commons. The NENC envisions an inside meeting place and outside a park.



It will soon be time to speak up for all of us who would like to see the two properties become a Community Center for the many North End neighborhoods, called Cushman Commons.

The process is currently hampered by the shutdown of most city services during the outbreak of the Corona Virus. The public workshop schedule has been delayed because of the virus, and the first round of workshops may have to be held online because of social-distancing requirements. All of us need to keep an eye out, so we know when the process will be started and how we can participate to give our ideas.

The best way to keep track of the process is to be on the email list for alerts from the North End Neighborhood Council. **You can sign up for the email list by going to cushmancommons.org and clicking the sign-up button at the bottom right of the page.** When asked to comment, please speak/write for "Cushman Commons" and help us all get a great spot for public gathering.

Julie Turner, Editor

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TacomaNorthSlope.org the NSHD web page

TROLLEY TIMES. The NSHD newsletter, published Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. Delivered to all single family homes in the NSHD. The current edition can always be found at: **<https://goo.gl/5sdbHq>**

North Slope NEWS. Sign up on NSHD web page, and have items of general NSHD news, events, and the on-line *Trolley Times* sent to you.

Send your questions, comments and remarks to **news@TacomaNorthSlope.org**

Seniors, Disabled May Qualify for Property Tax Relief

A program is available to citizens of Pierce County to save money on property taxes. If you are a homeowner at least age 61, or unable to work because of a documented disability regardless of age, and occupy your house at least 9 months a year, and meet certain income requirements, you may be exempted from part or all voted property taxes on your principal residence.

In addition, the taxable value of your primary residence will be frozen at the current amount.

More Pierce County homeowners qualify for property tax relief this year, due to an important change in State Law. The maximum household income allowed for a partial tax exemption is 65% of the median household median, which in Pierce County is \$45,708.

There are also additional property tax exemptions for senior or disabled homeowners with household incomes below \$38,676 (55% of median) and \$31,644 (45% of median).

Also, for military veterans, the required percentage of service-connected disability has been lowered from 100% to 80%.

If you think you may qualify, or have questions, call Pierce County Senior/Disabled Exemptions Office at 253-798-2169 or visit at the Pierce County Annex, 2401 S. 35th St. in Tacoma. The Assessor's office is to the right after you enter the lobby.

Available Forms from Pierce County

- Application for Senior Citizen or Disabled Person Property Tax Exemption
- Application for Renewal of Senior Citizen or Disabled Person Property Tax Exemption
- Proof of Disability Statement

One Last Note: It is your 2019 income with limited deductions that qualify you for reduced property tax you pay in 2020.



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From the Archives... Brick and Stone Streets

Taken from the *National Register of Historic Places*

Research by Marshall McClintock

With Tacoma's economic and population boom that began about 1900, the city had to deal seriously with its poor streets. Major streets in the downtown business district, as well as some streets along major streetcar lines, had been paved with wooden planks since 1890.

By 1900, however, wooden planking had proved less than satisfactory as a solution and most streets were still dirt and frequently washed out in the winter. Residents and businesses demanded a solution. The decade from 1900 to 1910 saw the most experimentation with different paving solutions.

During this time the primary mode of transportation was still the horse, and paving decisions were built around accommodating horse-drawn traffic. Traction for horses' hooves, especially on steep inclines, was a major concern. Automobiles only begin to appear in Tacoma in any significant numbers around 1915, about a year after Henry Ford began major production of the affordable Model T. Within 10 years, the automobile would predominate in Tacoma's city traffic.

Tacoma, like most growing American cities, began more or less experimenting with different paving options: wooden blocks, brick, macadam, stone, and asphalt. Just like electricity, it was "engineering by failure:" pave some streets, see what happens



Brick Gutter and Street

and then try again. Initial attempts with local brick revealed problems with the quality of the brick used, which crumbled quickly.

In 1905 the Denny Clay Company of Seattle introduced an improved paving brick designed for greater durability. Several streets, including Pacific Avenue, were paved with this brick as a test site. It is likely that the two blocks of North 9th within the North Slope Historic District were paved with this Denny brick. But, these bricks suffered the same problems as the new asphalt, especially when wet. Horses' hooves could gain little traction on steep inclines.

However, brick street gutters with brick laid edge up became widely adopted as the standard and were installed through the north end and central area of the city. Many of these gutters can still be found in the North Slope Historic District.

In 1907, the city contracted with T. J. Cannon to lay sandstone setts from the Wilkeson Sandstone Quarry on most streets running parallel to the cable lines from South 9th to South 21st Streets, as well as steep side streets along major trolley lines, at a cost of \$500,000. North 10th and North 11th Streets, along the important Point Defiance trolley line and through one of the city's important suburbs, certainly qualified. But, they were not much more successful getting horses uphill than the bricks, and asphalt soon overtook the paving of hillside streets, as automobiles became common.



Wilkeson Sandstone Setts

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the **Local Ownership** Difference!

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New Guidelines Add Language for Accessory Structures

Taken from "Draft of Guideline Changes, 2020," City Website (See Below)

The process for approving the added language to the NSHD ordinance has been interrupted by the Corona Virus shut-down, so we only have the proposed changes, not the final ones. These changes clear up the process for adding/changing structures for parking and DADUs. We will have to wait for final approval by LPC and the City Council

Some early NSHD houses provided space for storing various means of transportation, from carriages to automobiles; however, these structures were traditionally separate from the main building and were nearly always entered from the alley rather than from the street, where there is alley access.

Guidelines for Parking and Accessory Structures Garages

1. Alley accessed parking is the typical and predominant residential parking configuration in the district. Residential driveways and garages facing the street are typically only appropriate when there is no alley access, or other site constraints prevent alley-accessed parking (such as a corner lot).

2. **Minimize views of parking, accessory structures and garages from the public right-of-way.** Parking areas and garages should be set toward the rear of the lot to minimize visibility from primary rights of way. Parking lots and banks of garage doors along the front facade of a building do not conform to the character of the neighborhood. Where it is not possible to locate a parking structure to conceal it from view, it should be set well back from the front plane of the primary structure on the property.

New accessory structures should be clearly subservient to the primary structure on the lot. Off-street parking lots have no historic precedent in the residential areas of the neighborhoods and should be located behind the building and away from the street.

3. **Attached garages and carports are inappropriate.**

4. **New curb cuts are discouraged.** Residential driveways requiring curb cuts from a street or arterial are generally prohibited, unless the applicant can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that because of special circumstances not applicable to other property or facilities, including size, shape, design, topography, location, or surroundings, the strict application of this standard prevents alley-accessed parking. If approved, such curb cuts and approaches shall be consistent with the standards approved for the historic districts and on file in Public Works Dept.

5. **New accessory structures** such as garages and detached accessory dwelling units should utilize a similar material palette and configuration to historic primary structures on the lot. New accessory structures should meet the guidelines for new construction exterior materials, windows and roof form and shape. Garages and accessory structures should orient vehicle doors to the alley when possible and maintain a simple roof plan.

6. **Conversion of accessory structures.** Accessory structures that are converted to residential use should retain the exterior visual characteristics of the historic accessory structure, including door and window configuration, cladding materials, and form. Added features, such as porches, exterior staircases, and new window or door openings, should be located to be minimally visible from public rights of way.

Visit Tacoma web page for the Design Guidelines here:

<https://tinyurl.com/u438c8t>