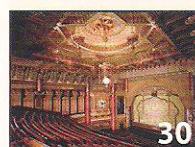
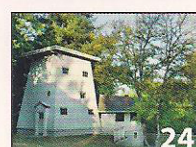
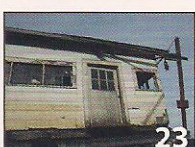
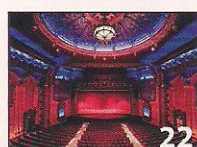


# 2019-2021 WASHINGTON STATE HERITAGE CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND

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WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The 'Curran House'  
4009 Curran Lane  
University Place, WA 98466

this is rather interesting of George Curtis talking about a young University Place and it and the school development.

George R. Curtis:

Speech at CJHS Rededication, March 4, 1980

*It was May 3, 1957 that the first dedicatory services of this junior high school were held.....*

*Principal Ray Beard and his assistant, Ken Lobeda, members of the staff and myself, proudly watched the ceremonies together in a room packed with students, their parents and friends.*

*This evening I have been thinking of what a far cry this complex facility is from the small two room school that I attended in Gig Harbor around 1910. The furnishings were basic, with the large pot-bellied stove in the rear of the room for heat. We all drank water from a bucket out of the same dipper, and washed our hands in the same washbasin. We walked to school as there was no such thing as transportation and our parents had to buy all textbooks. The teacher swept the schoolroom and carried in the firewood and also built the fire each morning. In spite of all of these things, which appear now as handicaps, we learned the three r's quite well.*

*....In the beginning, University Place was a timbered wilderness. A few farmers and loggers held large land grants. The luxuriant growth was proof of the fertile soil and climatic conditions. It must have been the beauty of the surrounding territory, the magnificent view of Puget Sound, the famous Narrows, our stately Mount Rainier, the Olympic Peaks, the abundant timber, the proximity to the city of Tacoma, and the promise of a superb residential district that made the trustees of the University of Puget Sound decide on this area for their new university.*

*Plans were drawn, land was acquired in the area lying between the present junior-senior high school site and Day Island. Excavations were started for the first building. Advertisements for property in the district were extravagant in their praise, such as light taxes, social and educational surroundings, no saloons, street car for the city of Tacoma (5 cents), and general park-like appearance of grounds. However, the Panic of 1893 cut short the University Project, and the name University Place remains as the only memento. By 1894, a school of seven pupils was being held in a rented house where Ernie Helling's 27<sup>th</sup> Street Car is now located. A one room frame school with a daylight basement was built where Les*

Magoon's home now stands on 27<sup>th</sup> and Elwood, and in 1915 a four room brick school, the nucleus of the late University Place Elementary School was built. The original section of this 1915 structure was the only remaining public historical landmark of University Place until it was demolished by the wreckers ball in 1976 - 61 years later. This building was fond in the memory of many hundreds of people. It is too bad that it was not spared.

I cannot forget my first adventure to University Place with my wife, Ann, in our first automobile, a 1926 Chevrolet Coupe. We were bubbling with excitement for the University Place Elementary School, reputed to be one of the best schools in Pierce County, was to become our school home for at least one year, but the years had a way of slipping by quickly and we remained for 45 years, until retirement in 1972. Our home is here, and we are still very much in love with University Place. We will never forget the drive out Sixth Avenue on a very narrow ribbon of pavement not over 12 ft. in width, with very poor street lighting along the way. Not one home to be seen after leaving Stevens Street until we ascended the Titlow Beach Hill. Passing the very popular operating hotel at Titlow Beach on the north side of the street and the Weaver Motion Picture Studios on the left (several moving pictures were filmed there) we drove on to Day Island across the first bridge, a wooded structure built in 1912. Enroute to the island we passed over a very large saw mill and door factory bearing the name Clear Fir Lumber Company which had been operating since 1919. This mill furnished employment to many men for the immediate community.

Day Island was a popular summer camping area and was subdivided in 1910. It was named for Surgeon Day who commanded one of Gray's ships.

As we drove around the island across the bridge and up the hill we were thrilled with what we saw on the corner of what is now 27<sup>th</sup> and Grandview, across from the Old Thomas Grocery store. It was a beautiful 12-year old school boasting its own gymnasium (a definite luxury in those days). The enrollment was 125 with five teachers, and I was to be one of the five. How proud I was!

At that time public transportation consisted of a motor bus connecting Day Island and Titlow Beach with Tacoma - and on the hill an electric street car which ran from 27<sup>th</sup> and Bridgeport through Major Bow's Regents Park Development (now Fircrest) to 11<sup>th</sup> and K Street - thence by cable car to downtown Tacoma. Yes - our community has an interesting background. We must not forget the laying of the railroad tracks along the waterfront throughout community in 1910 and the opening of the Pioneer Sand and Gravel Company (now known as the Lone Star Company) in 1912. This pit was known in those days as the largest of its kind in the United States.

Electric lights came in 1910, followed by telephones and rural mail service in 1912, water supply in 1923. Our University Place volunteer fire department was organized in 1941 and became the Pierce County Fire Protection District #3 in 1944, with Leslie B. McGaw as first chief.

Growth in school attendance was slow but steady between 1927 and 1940. University Place began to boom in the late 1940s, and by 1950 our gains dictated the need for a junior high school with an eye toward a senior high school. It was no longer feasible to transport our 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to Tacoma and Clover Park schools for their secondary education. The first parcel of land containing 23.5 acres for the four buildings planned to house our junior high school was purchased in 1954 for \$488 per acre. To this has been added over 35 acres, making a total of 60 acres available for junior and senior high school functions in the geographical center of University Place. Total acquisition cost was \$58,720 or an average cost of \$978 per acre. My part of the program is completed, except to give full credit for the development, operation and success of our school district as we know it today to the residents and taxpayers of our community for their generous support through the years and, to all who ever served as school directors, teachers, and administrators, we owe our thanks for their untiring efforts.

When I was superintendent of schools I was often asked the question by Tacomans and people from other Pierce County School districts – just how do they accomplish the many fine things that they do out in University Place? And with great pride, I would answer....you just don't know the people from University Place!