

The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society is a group of individuals dedicated to the preservation of the history of the area just north of Spokane, Washington. The Society collects oral, literary, and pictorial history to publish and otherwise make accessible to the public.

The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society meets on the second Saturday of each month at 9 AM. We gather at the Clayton Drive-In, located just off Highway 395 on Railroad Ave.

THE  
CLAYTON/DEER PARK  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
**Mortarboard**

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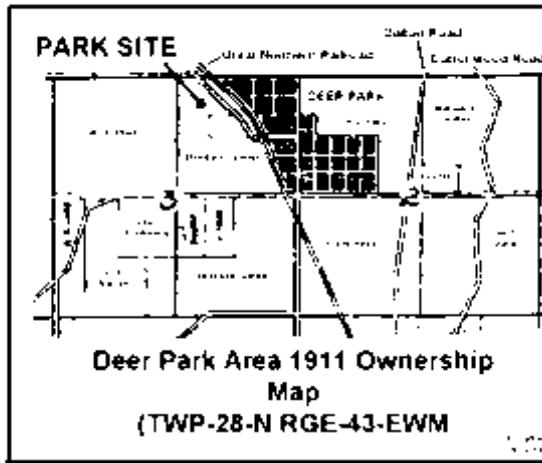
**A PARK FOR DEER PARK  
PETER COFFIN**

Free — Take One

**INTRODUCTION**

The need for a city park was expressed in the 1917 by the Deer Park Commercial Club. At that time there was no park for citizens to "...sit down and rest on a Sunday afternoon or in fact any other time."<sup>1</sup> W. H. Short offered the city two tracts, one west of the railroad tracks near Dragoon Creek and another near Crawford Street. Each of the tracts contained an area about the size of two city blocks. Frank Reed in the past had

offered the city a choice tract in the Reed's Addition in southeast Deer Park but the town council had let the opportunity expire. Commercial Club



**Figure 1: Map locating the tourist park site offered to Deer Park by W. H. Short. Section 3 on the map above was deeded to the Northern Pacific Railroad on May 27, 1895. W. H. Short must have obtained title to it prior to 1905 and the generation of this map.**

was the parcel between the

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president McCutcheon and a committee of three leading citizens were to take up Short's offer and pick the best site.

**A PARK SITE IS CHOSEN**

The Citizens Committee appointed in 1917 took some time in choosing the site and negotiating a purchase. In 1921 a Deer Park Union newspaper front page article reported that the "...Commercial Club Buys Tourist Park..."<sup>2</sup> of approximately nine acres.

The park area chosen

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road tracks adjoining Dragoon Creek that included some timberland and was a natural park area.

The price for the site was approximately \$100 per acre; terms were \$100 down and the balance to be paid in five years. Money the Commercial Club had received from a July 4, 1921, raffle of a bull from Arcadia Orchard's salesman's F. E. Parks farm was to be used for the initial payment.

The park site chosen had already been used by campers. It was located on the main highway, near enough to town so supplies could be obtained and yet far enough from the town center to be fairly private. Three hundred feet of the area fronted on Dragoon Creek which would allow access to water for laundry purposes. The Commercial Club acquisition committee proposed that a well be sunk on the property for "...domestic water supply...". A committee<sup>3</sup> was appointed to clean up the site by cutting underbrush and remove debris so that the park would be ready for spring 1922 use.

Another committee<sup>4</sup> was appointed to discuss purchasing the tract with Deer Park city council and to place the park under the Marshall's supervision.

### **NATIONAL RECOGNITION AND BIG PLANS**

By 1923 the news that Deer Park had a tourist park had been noted by the United States Touring Information Bureau. They had sent the Deer Park Union newspaper a questionnaire and a booklet containing a highway map of the United States with a large star on it locating Deer Park as having a tourist park<sup>5</sup>. In addition to this listing a Professor A. M. Doerner of the State College at Pullman had been formulating plans for a park in Pullman that could be copied in some degree in Deer Park. Professor Doerner advocated installing electric

lights, playground equipment, and careful landscaping.

By 1924 the North Spokane and South Stevens County Settlers Association was making arrangements to use Deer Park's Tourist Park for their summer picnic on Friday, June 19, 1924<sup>5</sup>. In the two previous years the picnic had been held in Losh's Grove on Wild Rose Prairie.

### **PURCHASING PROBLEMS**

Apparently the Deer Park City Council did not want to follow the purchase agreement they had signed with the Standard Lumber Company. By 1925 the Standard Lumber Company had gone into receivership and the city council had tried to make arrangements to pay the receiver much less than the Commercial Club had negotiated in 1921<sup>6</sup>. There was no record of the city have ever taken assignment from the Commercial Club. The receiver, a Mr. Herrick, accepted the money the city had paid as earnest money and would deliver the deed when final payment arrangements were made and the title had been cleared.

The matter was not quickly resolved and by the spring of 1926 the city had not come to any agreement with the receivers. At this time other property in the Standard Lumber receivership was selling quite rapidly and there was speculation that the land containing the tourist park tract would sell before the city could agree to any terms. An alternate park plan was suggested that a site east of the railroad depot owned by a Mrs. King be considered<sup>7</sup>. However by April 15, 1926, an article on the front page of the Deer Park Union newspaper indicated that the city had fashioned an agreement with receiver Herrick for a five acre tract west of the highway and north of a portion of the original nine acre tract purchased by then Deer Park Mayor George R. Warner. The sales price was \$625. This amount had been appropriated  
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during the years of negotiation before the sale was finalized. Mayor Warner indicated that as long as he owned the southern portion of the original tract he would let the city use it.

In 1929 Shell Oil purchased a tract of land just east of Mayor Warner's acreage and began building a warehouse and erecting bulk storage tanks. The cost of this plant was estimated at \$10,000<sup>8</sup>. Today the remains of this plant is the large green warehouse and fenced lot standing on the corner south and east of the city park. The rail spur that used to serve it has been removed.

#### DEPRESSION IMPROVEMENTS

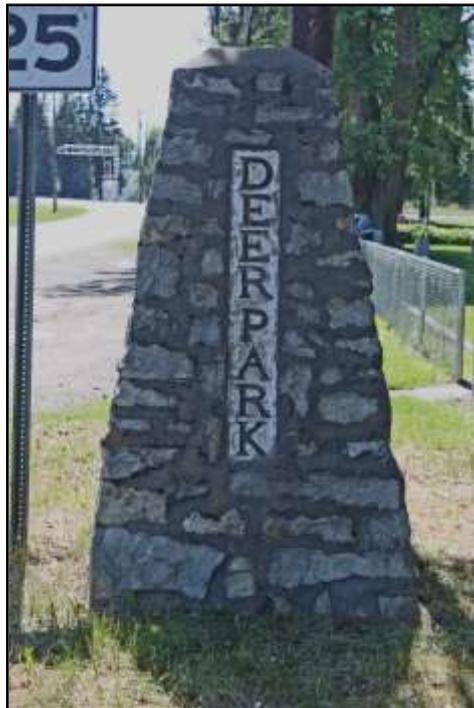
During the Depression Mayor Earl Mix presented a plan for a work project in the Tourist Park to the Work Projects Administration. He estimated that his proposal could give labor to about 20 men for one and one-half months<sup>9</sup>. This plan involved constructing a roadway into the park with trees to be planted on either side of the existing cinder track. Space for parking would be cleared on either side of the road and brush, dead trees, and stumps would be removed and burned. The land would be leveled and grass planted. An estimate of \$2000 for labor was included with the city providing the material. A superintendent and 20 men would be hired at \$68 per month for a 30 hour week of work. This job would be in effect as plans for the new airport were being arranged.

By September of 1935<sup>10</sup> the Works Projects Administration had allocated \$2500 for the tourist park project. At that time it was felt that the airport project would be approved to provide and additional eleven months of work. In December of 1935 the tourist park project had been making progress. The brush and dead trees had been removed and a circular drive and walks had been constructed<sup>11</sup>. The area between the road and grove of trees had been plowed and leveled as

much as the December weather would allow. The workmen were transferred to an Eighth Street project where Eighth would be graded and surfaced from "...Main Avenue to the Swamp Road...".

#### LATE 1930'S CONSTRUCTION

By 1939 the Tourist Park had a formal camp site on Spring Creek. At that time vandals had knocked shakes off the building's roofs, broken some lattice work, and stolen water hydrants<sup>12</sup>. The city Marshall Roy Morris was instructed to



**Figure 2: Stone pyramid marking the north main entrance to Deer Park. (P. Coffin, 2013 photograph)** There were two pyramids at each of the four entrances to Deer Park. These on Dahl Road west of town are the only ones remaining. The city park fence is on the right side of the picture.  
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check the park each evening to prevent further damage.

Other Park improvements must have been made in the period from 1935 to 1940. Stone pyramids were erected to mark the four main entrances to the town in 1940<sup>13</sup>. The town council and un-named WPA workers erected these granite stone markers. I have been unable to document the dates that the stone work at the entrance to the Tourist Park was constructed. However, the masonry work and stone materials are identical to the remaining pyramids on

Dahl Road next to the present day park. The Deer Park Union newspaper reported that the WPA crew working on the pyramids was also assigned the job of improving west Eighth Street. The drainage ditch stone work under Eighth Street at Park Avenue as well as the Tourist Park masonry walls resemble both the entry stone pyramids and the Tourist Park entrance masonry walls so it is likely that all these masonry structures were constructed in the 1935 to 1940 time period.

### **TOURIST CABINS FOR THE PARK**

Former Mayor George Warner built four tourist cabins (an early motel!) on the south side of the Tourist Park in 1940<sup>14</sup>. This property was the southern portion of the W. H. Short park tract that Warner indicated that the city could use in 1926 as long as he owned it.

These cabins were described as: "...a white exterior and a red shingled roof. The interiors are



**Figure 3: Masonry wall on the south side of the main entrance to the present city park. (P. Coffin, 2013 photograph)**

lined with ply wood stained light oak color. The cabins are wired for electricity, have handy outlets, linoleum covered floors, a sink, small wood stove, hot & cold running water and shelf space.” No mention of a toilet was made in the description!

### **THE PARK TODAY**

The main portion of the Tourist Park today is little changed from that of the 1940's. The park was renamed the Mix Park by the Deer Park City Council on July 7, 1965, in honor of the longest serving mayor, Earl D. Mix. The buildings noted in 1939 near Spring Creek no longer exist. The masonry walls still grace the entries to the original park but a new arching steel main entry gate has been erected. Several modern sanitary facilities have been constructed, the Warner-built tourist cabins have been demolished and most of the War-

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**Figure 4: Masonry wall at the southeast corner of the original city park. The Tourist Park “motel” used to be located in the area of the upper left corner of this photograph. (P. Coffin, 2013 photograph).**

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ner tract has been purchased by the city and added to the south side of the original park. During nice

weather almost any time of the year the park is in use for gatherings and informal picnics. The Settlers Picnic is held in the park in late July and the band stand is host to many Saturday evening concerts during the summer. The park is a valuable asset for the city of Deer Park.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Deer Park Union, March 23, 1917, front page.
2. Deer Park Union, September 22, 1921, front page.
3. The committee was composed of chairman: Dr. H. H. Slater, members: George Robbins, L. C. McMahan, Frank Young, Rev. C. Judy, H. B. Walton, J. W. Mendenhall, I. N. Smock, L. G. Wade, Earl Mix, E. E. Wood, Mrs. Carl Jacobson, and W. H. Short.
4. This committee was composed of H. B. Walton, O. E. McCutchan, and W. W. Gilles.
5. Deer Park Union, February 8, 1923, front page.
6. Deer Park Union, August 6, 1925, front page.
7. Deer Park Union, April 8, 1926, front page.
8. Deer Park Union, June 6, 1929, front page.
9. Deer Park Union, August 8, 1935, front page.
10. Deer Park Union, September 26, 1935, front page.
11. Deer Park Union, December 19, 1935, front page.
12. Deer Park Union, April 13, 1939, front page.
13. Deer Park Union, May 9, 1940, front page.
14. Deer Park Union, May 16, 1940, front page.

## E. M. BLEVINS

### EDITORS NOTE:

**This is one of a series of articles about people of the Deer Park district. It is published to better acquaint you with those who help to make Deer Park.**

Scholar, civic worker and educator; superintendent of public schools. E. M. Blevins is entitled

to wear more of the alphabet after his name than any other man in the district. Yet he is always the

modest unassuming, hard working school director and friend of youth.

Emery M. Blevins was born on a farm near the little town of Glade Springs, North Carolina in 1886, and he claims to be a typical “Tar Heel.” His background and family history are filled with an air of romance and adventure. His family on both sides came from France. His mother’s family name was Duvall, and the name Blevins is French for wheat and wine. The Blevins family were farmers for generations back and the name was taken from the work they followed.

In the early 1600’s as part of a group of non-conforming Huguenots the families came to America seeking religious freedom. Hawkins the famous sea pirate was one of his ancestors. The Blevins’s were given an original grant of land from the colony of Virginia and the adjoining piece of ground was deeded to the Duval family by the state of North Carolina. It was on a part of this original grant to his mother’s family that Emery was born. Portions of these properties are still held by the original families.

Like all southern farmers, his family had slaves on the plantation. In fact, his grandfather was a Confederate soldier who lost his life at Gettysburg or one of the nearby battlefields. Dave Blevins a relative freed the first negro released in the south, and gave him a piece of land. This old darky took the name of his benefactor, and is referred in many histories of the slave days. This was many years before the emancipation proclamation of the freedmen’s bureaus.

#### Comes West As Boy

When he was only six years old Emery’s parents moved to Oaksdale, Washington, where they continued the farming business. Young

Blevins received his early schooling there and entered Cheney Normal.

Before he had completed one year of college, he had married a childhood sweetheart, a girl he had known since coming to Washington, and secured a position as principal of a rural school just south of Pullman, Washington. By the end of the next summer he had received a teacher’s diploma and had been promoted to principal of the school at Edwall. Here he made an outstanding record by building the district, through consolidation, from a four teacher grade school to one with a four year accredited high school. This was all in four short years.

So it has been since that time. Blevins has been a builder. Going to school summers and teaching winters, he attended the University of Washington and Leland Stanford University. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree, his Master of Arts Degree and has qualified for the highest of all degrees, the Ph.D.

Following Edwall, he became superintendent of schools at Newport, serving from 1914 to 1919. Next he went to Rosalia for three years, Ritzville for four years and North Bend for four years. In each town definite growth and progress was made.

After taking advantage of the Denny Fellowship to resume two years of uninterrupted University work, Mr. Blevins came to Deer Park in 1933.

His record since that time is very well known. The building has been enlarged, the playfield cleared and condition materially improved.

Besides his school activities, he has found time to serve two terms as president of the Deer Park Commercial Club, act as Junior Warden of the Masonic Lodge and take care of memberships in the Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, and Rebekahs.

As to future ambitions he thinks that someday he might like to teach school administration in a good college; but what he really looks forward to is

the time when he will retire to his farm in the Pa-louse country and live next to the soil.

column name “Who’s Who In Our District”.  
The writer of this column is not named.)

**(This article was published on the front page of  
the May 4, 1939, Deer Park Union under the**

<b>Clayton/ Deer Park Historical Society Minutes — July 13, 2013</b>
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In attendance: Betty Burdette, Mark Wagner, Bill Sebright, Sharon Clark, Bob Gibson, Pete Coffin, Judy Coffin, Lorraine Nord, Warren Nord, Don Reiter, Mary Jo Reiter, Tom Costigan, and Grace Hubal.

Society President, Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. He reported: 1) Gloria Hartley donated a 1901 Spokane souvenir picture book to the Society in the name of the Lawrence Lucas family. 2) Jessie and Tom Lathimer called requesting information on the Wild Rose Methodist Church. Bill gave them Charlotte Yingst's name and phone number. Roxanne Camp organized the records at the DP Methodist Church. She found some material that went to the Wild Rose Church. Also it was suggested that the North Spokane County Museum might have information on the Church. Bill contacted the Latimers with these suggestions. 3) Linda Childs called saying she has an antique pump organ. She was hoping we would want it for our "museum." If anyone is interested in it let Bill know. Ms. Childs lives in the Deer Park area. 4) Arrangements are in place for exhibits at Mix Park at Settlers Day, Clayton Grange Hall for Brickyard Day, and for the Clayton Fair.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported that there is \$3,595.97 in the main checking account. There were \$72.00 in deposits. Maintenance Web hosting account had \$150.56 in funds with a \$10.95 in monthly hosting fee (need to check on this). Since the checking account is above \$3,000 there is no service charge from the bank).

Grace Hubal, Secretary, had no report.

Vice President, Pete Coffin reported: 1) He gave Editor Sharon Clark a Mortarboard article draft

titled “A Park for Deer Park.” It is the history of what we know as Mix Park. 2) Two rough drafts of possible Mortarboard manuscripts have been written. “Drag Racing at Deer Park” describes the history of the Deer Park Drag Strip at the airport. It is co-authored by Mr. Greg Fury who is the unofficial historian of the strip and a 1960’s dragster driver. “A Project as Big as the Panama Canal” details the Gravity Project to irrigate the Columbia Basin from the Pend Oreille River at Albany Falls.

Print Editor, Sharon Clark reported: 1) The July 2013 Mortarboard #63 was distributed. Articles include: Electric power coming to Deer Park by Peter Coffin, and a memorial to Lynn Holcomb by Eddie Nordby. 2) The Collected Newsletters Volume Sixteen is now available. Several copies were sold. 3) Karen Meyer forwarded to Sharon an article on the Deer Park Jaycees that Bob Gibson, and Cliff and Karen Meyer put together.

Webmaster Director, Penny Hutten had no report.

We are still trying to get the word out about the 100-year DPHS reunion July 27. There are several parts to the 100-year reunion: 1) Get "togethers" at the reunion section of Mix Park. 2) DPHS Antlers available at the CDPHS booth. 3) A get together at City Council Room at City Hall where many class pictures are. 4) Guided group tours of the "new" DPHS. 5) Make sure to sign up at Betty Burdette's table near the Gazebo. Warren Nord brought in a copy of the peace agreement signed by Japan and the United States.

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There was a discussion about the grand marshal for Clayton Days. It was decided that Bill Sebright will be grand marshal.

This will be the last year the Clayton Drive-In will be involved with Clayton Brickyard Day. Also Toby Tobeck will not be doing the Clayton Burger Run after this year. There was some discus-

sion about what to do for next year. Nothing was decided. We are still looking for ideas.

Next meeting: Saturday, August 10, 9 AM at the Clayton Drive-In.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 AM.

The meeting minutes submitted by Grace Hubal, Secretary.

## Editorial Policy Regarding Correcting Errors and/or Omissions

Information published here is compiled from many sources, including personal memories. It is often difficult or impossible to verify such recollections through outside documentation. Our editorial policy toward the veracity of personal recollections tends toward the casual – since little harm is normally done by such errors. But our editorial process also invites public review and input regarding the accuracy of the information we publish, and when such review either suggests or reveals errors or items open to dispute our “Letters” department will act as a forum allowing the airing of such disagreements in an effort to ascertain the truth and correct any probable or demonstrated errors. We also believe it’s important that such disagreements be recorded, even if they can’t be settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

We encourage everyone to submit any arguments as to fact to the editor in writing — since the written form reduces the chance of further misunderstandings. As is standard policy, all letters will be edited for spelling, word usage, clarity, and — if necessary — contents. If advisable, the editor will confer directly with the letter writers to insure that everyone’s comments and corrections are submitted in a literate, polite, and compelling manner — as best suits the editorial image of this Society’s publications.

## Society Want Ads

**WANTED:** Information and photos regarding the history of the Brickyard/Ramble In Tavern

**WANTED:** Any stories and photos of your family’s history in connection with their occupations and settlement in the Clayton/Deer Park Area

**WANTED:** Any stories and photos from Williams Valley #452 and Gardenspot Grange78 Contact: Ann Fackenthall, WVG

### Society Contacts

C/DPHS, Box 293, Clayton, WA 99110  
Bill Sebright, president — (sebrightba@gmail.com) 276-2693  
Peter Coffin, vice president — (pcffn@q.com)  
Sharon Clark, editor — (sharonclark@centurytel.net)  
Grace Hubal, secretary — (hubals@msn.com)

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