

BLHS Newsletter

Winter 2019

Mark Your
CALENDAR



WELCOME!

JOIN the BLHS for the first Quarterly Meeting of 2019
6:00 PM
Big Lake Community Church
Thursday, January 24

Guest speakers will be Fire Chief Brett Berg and Donna Moore widow of Fred Moore, Big Lake's early Fire Chief. They will be sharing stories of BLVFD history.

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BLHS Biennial Exhibit—August 2018



Above: A special thank you to Phil Zimmerman (standing) our BLVFD host during our 2018 Biennial Exhibit. He is answering questions concerning activity at the fire department following Melba Hall's PowerPoint presentation of Big Lake's early history. Our new venue at the BLVFD Community Room was very well received. It was bright, airy, and comfortable plus the tables encouraged story telling and conversation while enjoying coffee and cookies.

Below: Guests tour the old town and mill site following the early history presentation during the BLHS 2018 Biennial Exhibit. We would like to express our appreciation to Gary and Chris Johnson owners of the historical property for welcoming visitors to the site. Gary willingly shared artifacts discovered on the property as well as indicating where buildings, etc. were located—thank you!





Jim Farmer's grandparents, William and Osie Calkins purchased this home in 1901. This house was not only the Calkins family home but also the local polling place for almost 40 years.

MOUNT VERNON ARGUS--

1914

It Made the News—105 years Ago

ELECTION DAY

"Hear ye, hear ye, the polls are now open." Old Mrs. Beale would stand on the path in front of Grandmothers house, first facing North and then South, and would announce the opening of the polls. My brother Dee Dee and I, maybe 4 and 5, with Mrs. Beale's encouragement would shout along with her. "Hear Ye, hear ye, the polls are now open." You see, from the 1930's into the 1960's Grandma's house was the polling place for the Montborne Precinct, which also included Ehrlich, Walker Valley, and the Finn Settlement. My Grandfather William Calkins was the Precinct Committeeman for the Democrats until his death in 1948, Uncle Elza did it for a year or two then my mother took over until her eyesight prohibited further participation in the late 60's.

Each party had Precinct Committeemen, elected or appointed by the party. Their job was to register voters, help get out the vote, and most importantly, sit on the Election Board. Made up of three members from the precinct, one from each party and a third from the party of the current president, the Election Board would ensure fairness and preside over the electoral process. On Election Day they would gather at Grandma's and create two or three privacy booths and prepare the room. Outside were polling place signs and a flag hung beside the entry door. New ballots were stacked on the table in the center of the room and the ballot box prepared. A large book with names and addresses of all the registered voters in the precinct dominated the table that the three board members (all women!) sat around. Identity was not a problem; one of the three would know every person that came through the door. Each voter would sign on their line in the big book then be given a ballot which when finished was placed in the slotted box. There were no "I voted" stickers but there were homemade cookies and coffee or tea. Almost everyone chewed the fat for a few minutes. Many of the older folks knew grandma and visited with her in the kitchen before departing. Grandma also got the job of watching over Dee Dee and me. It was always a fun day.

When the polls closed Mrs. Beale would repeat the shouting, I think it was mostly for us kids benefit. "Hear ye, hear ye, the polls are now closed." I'm sure there were others, but I mostly remember the board being Mrs. Beale, mother, and Mrs. Mossington. They would open the ballot box and together count the votes. All three would look at each ballot individually as they tabulated to be sure there was agreement. Then they would take the ballots to the courthouse in Mount Vernon to be counted in the county total.

I know that more people vote with mail-in ballots, but I still miss the ritual of the polling place.

Jim Farmer
Montborne Historian

Sam Nock is building a kitchen and porch on his residence.

J. Grocott is building a new residence on the west Big Lake waterfront

Nelson-Neil Lumber Company is erecting a new bungalow at Montborne to rent. Houses are at a premium this fall.

The opening attendance at the school was not as large as was expected; the heavy rains keeping many children at home.

The Progressive Mill Company has built a new bolt chute at the old shingle mill on Big Lake.

J.R. Stevens and Henry Ranche's teams went through the bridge in West Big Lake. Mr. Stevens' team received slight leg wounds.

The Nelson-Neil Lumber company mill at Montborne shut down for a few days.

Two of the Day Lumber Company's cows were shot last week.

Ben Gardner is building a new chimney on Gardner hall for Mrs. Laflame this week.

Mr. Klaness experienced a wetting last week when a scow load of lumber overturned on the lake.

SHORE LANDS ON BIG LAKE

I own all the west shore of Big Lake, have platted the first mile and a half into half acre and acre tracts. This first plat is nearly all sold out, have only a few tracts left. Price \$125.00 to \$200.00 each. Terms \$10.00 cash and \$5.00 a month.

H.C. Peters
Owner

800 Third Avenue -- -- -- SEATTLE

(Ad published in the *Argus*, June 27, 1913)