



DAVID DOUGLAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

FINAL NEWSLETTER
JUNE 2016

The Predictable Ending

It is with regrettable sadness and disappointment that I and three remaining Board of Directors (Betty Egner, Jack Leshner, Dolores Wood) publicly announce the David Douglas Historical Society will officially cease to exist effective June 30, 2016. All assets, financial and property inventoried as artifacts acquired by the Society and those items accumulated for conduct of ongoing business shall be returned or otherwise transferred to the David Douglas School District Board.

Almost two years have past since the November 2014 Newsletter identified the looming threat of Society closure. In the final paragraph of that document, I wrote:

.....the loss of Board members has (have) indeed created serious questioning for the future of the Society. It is clear, without a dedicated and committed Board of Directors the David Douglas Historical Society is in a precarious and critical state of existence. The Society needs your help to continue its mission. Volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors or to assist with the multitude of tasks waiting to be undertaken.

This plea to our membership and direct person-to-person community contact encouraging individuals to join with the Board to continue the activities of the Historical Society produced no results, leaving the existing four Board members no alternative but to bring to an end the existence of the Society. Four individuals cannot sustain the operation and mission of an organization.

The closing of a non-profit corporation is not an easy task. Personally, I found it to be more daunting than creating one! During these past almost two years the multitude of activities associated with the ending has consumed the majority of our twice-monthly Board meetings. We are tired, exhausted and dispirited. I had little thought when accepting the Presidents chair in the spring of 2012 I would be a participant in closing down the David Douglas Historical Society in the not too distant future. However, I did voice concern in the November 12, 2012 Annual Report noting the Society must grow, change, and keep pace with the diversity and ever changing socio-economic factors of the broader David Douglas Community or indeed fade away. I wrote:

If the David Douglas Historical Society is to continue, is to grow, is to become a participatory and contributing member of the larger community we must move out of the shadows of the best kept secret to one as a recognized and credible, if not a major player, at least a player in mid-east Multnomah

An Historical Perspective

The David Douglas Historical Society was established by a School District Board resolution in September 1976 followed by District Superintendent Howard Horner appointing the officers for the Society's first Board of Directors. The Directors and members created Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws to provide an operational structure for the Society.

Over the following thirty-five years, Society members identified and accomplished a number of goals. Among these were:

- the placement of physical markers at a number of locations to identify those of prominent historical significance, including one clearly visible in front of the Knecht's Auto Parts store located at 12409 SE Division. It marks the original location of the Buckley School, the predecessor to South Powellhurst located at 2900 SE 122nd. If you stand in front of the store and look to the left hand corner you will spot a boulder embedded in concrete with a plaque noting the historical significance of the location.
- the Society in an effort to provide an historical perspective to the educational process used a room in North Powellhurst to set-up a replica of an “early days” classroom complete with a teacher and students, played of course by mannequins. The classroom and volunteer Society members hosted elementary school students who were given a quick course in how learning was provided in that era. Because of District needs the classroom no longer exists but is displayed in limited fashion in the lobby of South Powellhurst.
- In November 1979 the Society assisted with placing a time capsule in the floor of the Howard Horner Performing Arts Center to be opened one hundred years later in 2079.
- Another remarkable accomplishment for the David Douglas Society was the establishment of a museum displaying artifacts donated from community members and numerous objects, photos, and documents collected from throughout the District buildings demonstrating the beginning and continued development of Multnomah County School District #40. These displays are located in the South Powellhurst Board Room.
- But without a doubt the most significant accomplishment the Society achieved in the organization’s first ten years occurred in 1989 with the publication of, “*The History and Folklore of the David Douglas Community*”. The book is a collection of life stories told by families who resided in the David Douglas community and their contribution to the area’s growth and development. These stories along with historical facts of the area and those which led to the creation of the District, is an excellent description of how the community came into existence.

Embezzlement of Society Funds & Current Bank Balance

In the November 2014 Newsletter, I wrote, “*In mid-June of this year we discovered that a trusted Board member apparently violated that trust*”. Kevin Gifford, our Treasurer, was illegally withdrawing funds from our bank accounts for his own use. Banking records show these actions beginning on May 5, 2012 from the Bank of the Far West and on June 20, 2012 from Wells Fargo. In May 2013 Mr. Gifford asked the Board to close the previous two accounts and transfer funds from them into a single account with US Bank. He claimed using one bank account would make his reporting of financial records to the Board much easier. Mr. Gifford continued his illegal behavior, embezzling funds from the single US Bank account made easier with the closure of the other two.

With the initial discovery of missing funds in June 2014, a Portland Police Department report was filed with the “White Collar Crime” unit. On October 24, 2014 I met with Elizabeth

Cruthers, the detective assigned to our case and together we reviewed the records from the three banks. Because of the complexities involved with three different banks and more than one account in two of the banks, I agreed to, *“turn all financial and other pertinent records over to a special Forensic Auditing class at George Fox University in Newberg. The students will examine and prepare a case for presentation to the District Attorney and Grand Jury for possible criminal prosecution.”* I met twice with the small class, their professor and Det. Liz Cruthers who was also a consultant to the class. I defined the David Douglas Historical Society, and answered the student’s questions regarding the fiscal structure and operation of the organization. The students reported their finding in the spring of 2015. Based on the students report and the work of Det. Cruthers, a “True Bill” was handed down by the Grand Jury and Mr. Gifford was arrested in the fall of 2015 charged with “theft of funds” from the Society.

After several Court dates were scheduled and reset, a Court appearance set for January 19, 2016 was held. I attended and read a prepared statement to the Court and Kevin. In part the statement read:

“Your theft of funds from the David Douglas Historical Society have (has) contributed to the dissolution of the Society, and with this Court action today the final chapter for that process is now done. Thus, future generations of the David Douglas School District will be able to learn of your criminal behavior and the resultant outcome... Such sociopathic behavior is unforgivable and if you seek such forgiveness you will need to seek that elsewhere, but neither from me nor the whole of the David Douglas Historical Society.”

The Court sentenced Kevin to serve eighty hours of community service and thirty-six months of probation. He was ordered to pay the Society an additional \$4,593.81 in restitution. In November 2014 Mr. Gifford had sent us a letter of apology and two checks totaling \$5,216.22. Together these two amounts show Kevin had embezzled \$9,610.03 in recoverable funds.

Our current bank balance on June 14, 2014 is \$10,735.30. This balance includes \$925.27, a portion of which is the ending balance at closure of the embezzled account, monies donated from individuals and community groups throughout the history of the Society are another source, receipts from the sale of Society merchandise are included, and membership dues collected prior and after the discovery of the stolen dollars are part of the \$925.27

All previous financial reports dating from 2011 to the Board of Directors and those contained in Annual Reports are fraudulent and should be disregarded by those who have copies or might access them on our web pages.

The President’s Review: Spring 2012 to June 30, 2016

Let me begin this section with noting further information and details of the comments to follow can be found in Society reports and newsletters written during this period and up loaded to the Society’s web pages on the District’s internet site.

With the April 2013 Annual Meeting the Society saw the need to find mutual areas of engage-

ment with other area organizations with the goal of increasing Society recognition and credibility throughout the community. Our Mission statement includes this goal and is posted on the District web site, in part it reads:

- to educate constituents of the David Douglas School District community about the dynamic and historical developmental nature of our geographical area...
- to support, encourage and participate in activities and events with other District Community organizations...
- to encourage, support and participate with the diverse multicultural demographic population comprising School District #40 in developing understanding, identity and commitment to the District and Community...
- by acknowledging these principles and learning from the past we create today's processes for understanding of the present which become tomorrow's history...

With these ambitious goals we launched our 2013 Annual Meeting with the showing of the documentary, "*Finding David Douglas*", produced by Lois Leonard. We invited the public to join with us to view the film and meet Lois for a discussion about the famous Scottish explorer for whom the District is named. This was the first event ever held in the District honoring Douglas and of greater significance, it was an event aimed at the whole population of the David Douglas Community consistent with the Mission and goals statement.

Eight months later, December 2013, Lois met with the District Curriculum Director, Brooke O'Neill to develop a plan for integrating the documentary into the elementary grade subject matter throughout the District. This too was a first no other School District at that time was utilizing the film to educate students about the life and times of David Douglas.

During 2013 the Society worked hard with organizing and preparing for participation in eight community activities. Along with other area non-profit groups we joined in Neighborhood Night Out celebrations, two community parades and several special business association events. Using artifacts from our collections to display the history of the District, we encouraged those visiting our booth to join the Society and consider membership on the Board of Directors.

In 2014, with only four active Board members remaining to plan and participate in community activities, we held only four events. The handwriting was, then, clearly on the "wall".

The public visiting our booths voiced interest in the displays and the history of the District. Not uncommon, most individuals dropping by our booths did not know who David Douglas was! But despite the interest voiced by numerous individuals, our efforts to encourage membership in the Society were unmet. Verbalizing the unspoken question, one member of the public asked a Board member, "*why do we need one of them (an historical society)?*" Perhaps this is the essential question for the public at large. For the David Douglas Historical Society the answer is defined and described in the Society's mission and goals stated in the opening paragraphs of this section.

While struggling to maintain or increase membership on the Board of Directors we were facing other time consuming tasks, some which the Society identified and those which the District requested. These included:

- in early Spring of 2012 the District asked the Society to move the museum displays from a room shared with special education classes to the “Board Room” located in the South Powellhurst building. The artifacts would now be in five glass cases and one bookcase drastically reducing the area of display. The move forced us to sell, give away, or discard items which could be declared non-essential to the historical significance of the District. Mistakes in determining which object fit what category were made while complying with this request.
- throughout the remainder of 2012 and into 2013 members of the Board of Directors spent countless hours determining which remaining artifacts would be placed in the cases and those placed in storage for future display. None of us had this kind of experience in the past!
- another set of tasks included review and evaluation of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws to determine relevancy to the current operational structure. Although begun, this task was not completed.
- review of material collected for the publication of, “*David Douglas Community, 21st Century*”, a companion volume to, “*The History and Folklore of the David Douglas Community*” was started. The completion of this task was set aside when the move from one room to another created compounded problems for the Board members and has not been finished.
- locating a room or facility independent of the District buildings was an additional task which some members of the Board saw as a priority, but was abandoned when other tasks consumed Society attention.
- revising fiscal policy and management was a priority, establishing a chart of accounts consistent with the current emphasis on community activities and the creation of a yearly operating budget were identified as critical, but not completed before the embellishment of Society funds occurred.
- developing a written document with the District setting out expectations and agreement with each organizations relationship to the other was begun but not completed. However, the relationship between the Society and the District Administration is one of mutual respect and cooperation without a current written statement.

These projects, together with the activities required for participating in community events, and the unfilled positions on the Board of Directors, became too much of a burden for so few to shoulder. With the recognition of this reality the decision to dissolve the David Douglas Historical Society and return the assets to the School District occurred in late 2014 or early 2015. The many tasks associated with ending an organization have been exhaustive, demanding many hours over the past eighteen months of Board member attention and activity.

Transition of Society Assets to the David Douglas School District

Artifacts on either display or those in storage remain the property of the School District and no action transferring ownership is required. The funds on deposit in the US Bank account have been accrued over the forty- year history of the David Douglas Historical Society and will be disbursed to the District with the following recommendation for use:

- for a period of no less than three years or more than five years the District should hold the designated funds for any ongoing maintenance of the artifacts and for funding the Society should an appropriate and qualified community group apply to restore the organization...\$2,800.00
- arranged for the manufacture and placement of a plaque honoring David Douglas in a suitable location in a District building, included should be a prize of no less than \$100 awarded to a student or group of students who have submitted a winning script for the plaque memorializing David Douglas...\$3,000.00
- David Douglas High School student clubs and activity groups have provided valuable assistance to the Society, in recognition of their contribution the following funding is recommended for their activities...\$2,000.00
- to further honor David Douglas the Scottish explorer for whom the District is named, an annual David Douglas Days Celebration or other suitable title or time period sponsored by the District possibly in partnership with community groups, to be initiated in no less than two to three years by funding with initial seed money of...\$2,938.00

These allocations will be discussed with District Administration now that a definite date for terminating the Society is identified June 30, 2016, the final restitution from Gifford has been received, and recently the tasks for continued artifact display and storage have been completed. The funding amounts will be adjusted should any costs with closing the Society occur. How the several activities described will be planned, developed and implemented and by which unit of the District, is left with the District Administration to best determine.

One final task remains to return the Historical Society to the School District. I have agreed to write a memorandum for the District Administration to use in the management and maintenance of the historical artifacts. Included in the document will be the above recommendations for disbursement of the remaining Society funds as of June 30th.

Closing Remarks

In bringing to a close this last formal communication to the David Douglas Historical Society membership, I want to express my apology for the delay in providing up to date information since the November 2014 Newsletter. It has been an arduous journey from then to now. The Board of Directors has sought to accomplish a successful and appropriate termination of the David Douglas Historical Society, I hope we will have achieved that goal.

On behalf of, Betty, Jack, Dolores, and myself, I want to extend a very appreciative thank you to the individuals and families who, when learning of the embezzlement of funds, donate funds or paid past dues to sustain the Society.

I think it appropriate to close this Final Newsletter with a quote from a member of the Board of Directors of the Powellhurst-Gilbert Neighborhood Association when reading of our closure, he wrote:

“So sorry to hear that the DDHS is in the process of dissolution... As an educator I always have to have faith in the growth and relationships that are forged along the way. Reading my copy of the book about our neighborhood, and watching the film about David Douglas a few years ago, has helped me form deeper ties to this place we call home.

Thanks tons for all your good work and energy throughout the years.

Best,
Richard Dickinson”

Richard’s words poignantly described what the David Douglas Historical Society has been about! Thank you Richard!

Ted Condon, President
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<http://www.ddouglas.k12.or.us/our-district/david-douglas-historical-society/>