

## Lakeland Hills and “Lakeland” History

With resumption of a regularly scheduled community newsletter, a search is underway to find and share the roots of the area now known as the Lakeland Homeowners Association. This ongoing feature of the Newsletter will select certain key elements for elaboration. Some of these will include:

The Roland Crabtree era 1968 through February 1984  
The Beneficial Construction / Development - 1984 the late 1989  
Lakeland Hills HOA era Recorded September 22, 1989  
The Hendley and Henderson – Late 1989 through late 1999  
The Evergreen Tucci Partners LLC Era - late 1990'S to the present

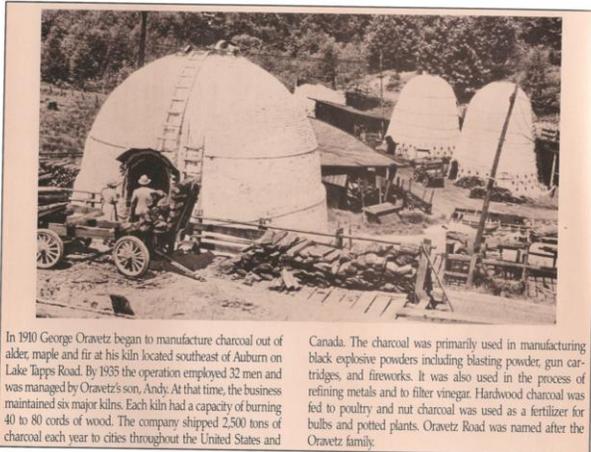
### Notes of “Being there”

by Rich Wagner

Rich Wagner lives two miles east of Lakeland in the Hidden Valley Neighborhood. He is a retired Weyerhaeuser research engineer and has been an Auburn City Councilman since 1990



“We moved to southeast Auburn in 1978 just before the Lakeland Hills development began. We drove home on the old Oravetz Road alignment that turned off East Valley Highway (A Street SE) just south of the old steel White River Bridge, along the street that goes past Ilako elementary school, which wasn't built yet.



In 1910 George Oravetz began to manufacture charcoal out of alder, maple and fir at his kiln located southeast of Auburn on Lake Tapps Road. By 1935 the operation employed 32 men and was managed by Oravetz's son, Andy. At that time, the business maintained six major kilns. Each kiln had a capacity of burning 40 to 80 cords of wood. The company shipped 2,500 tons of charcoal each year to cities throughout the United States and

Canada. The charcoal was primarily used in manufacturing black explosive powders including blasting powder, gun cartridges, and fireworks. It was also used in the process of refining metals and to filter vinegar. Hardwood charcoal was fed to poultry and nut charcoal was used as a fertilizer for bulbs and potted plants. Oravetz Road was named after the Oravetz family.

Kersey way at that time was also called Oravetz Road because the road was built by George Oravetz in 1910 to reach his charcoal making business located just south of the Kersey Way-Oravetz Road traffic light. Some of his baking kilns are still there, covered by blackberry vines and behind the gravel pit company's no-trespassing signs. He made the charcoal primarily to supply explosives manufacturers, up to 2,500 tons per year.

About 1978, the building that now houses the Evergreen Community Center on East Valley Highway was built by Seattle First National Bank, anticipating the Lakeland growth. It only lasted a few years until the bank sold it to Washington Education Association, the teachers union. Later the City of Auburn bought it for a planned fire station site but rented it to Evergreen when a better fire station location for accessing Lakeland became available on the top of the hill.

A small sawmill building, about 20 feet by 20 feet, was still located beside the mill pond in 1978 but it had been abandoned since the 1960's. The huge circular saw, about 5 feet in diameter, was still there, along with the electrical gear which looked pretty dangerous. I have heard.

Roland Crabtree was the developer who began Lakeland Hills about 1977. He owned most of the land along the river, as well as most of the hill. Before the advent of strict environmental controls, he dredged a lot of rock from the river bed in order to fill the site that became Auburn Riverside High School. When questioned about the dredging, he maintained that since the larger White River was diverted by King County in 1906 into the much smaller Stuck River that historically flowed through that area, apparently without consulting the property owners who were subjected to much wider river bed erosion, he felt he was entitled to remove the rock from

the river bed. He invited the County to “take back their White River”, which before it was diverted, flowed down the route of today’s Auburn way to join the Green River near where 8<sup>th</sup> Street NE goes up to Lea Hill. The County declined to “take back their river” as Mr. Crabtree suggested.

Mr. Crabtree, who earlier had developed the Twin Lakes area in Federal Way, liked to do work on Sundays, by himself, operating earth-moving equipment; perhaps to avoid some city building inspectors’ prying eyes about what he was covering up with his Sunday excavations. Unfortunately, while working at Lakeland one Sunday, he had a serious accident while operating a piece of equipment and he died as a result.

His heirs began selling off the Lakeland Hills properties and Pat Hendley bought most of it. He began making investments in the project, including paying for a large part of the new bridge across the White River on A street SE. The old steel framework bridge was removed by just pushing it into the river, then disassembling it with a cutting torch, a practice that probably couldn’t be done today for fear of damaging salmon habitat.

During the semi-recession of the early 1980’s he was strapped for money and in process of selling his property along the river to the school district, to be used for Auburn Riverside High School. He did some fraudulent paper work in order to speed up collection of his payment and ended up being convicted for that; but the school district did end up owning the property.

The School District needed to rezone the property for school use instead of Crabtree’s original zoning for apartments and mobile homes. Since the land was fill material and close to the river, several City council members, including current Auburn Municipal Court Judge Patrick Burns, opposed the rezone for flood risk reasons. But the Council did pass the rezone, after considerable debate, with current Council member Virginia Haugen casting the deciding fourth affirmative rezone vote among the seven council members.

Hendley sold the rest of his Lakeland Properties to Chuck Henderson, who proceeded with the development under a new zoning ordinance passed by the Auburn City Council that allowed for master planning of the entire community as a Planned Unit Development (PUD). That ordinance has served the City well in Lakeland because Henderson and his successors always understood that any City concessions for the builder, for example smaller building lots and private streets, had to be balanced by extra benefits for the residents, for example more parks, trails, better streets and storm drainage such as the Mill Pond system.

But as other developers began to utilize the PUD ordinance, for example the Kersey III development just east of Lakeland, the City Council became dissatisfied with the balance of builder concessions and resident benefits, so they repealed the PUD ordinance. However, since Lakeland was already “vested” with their master plans, it is still being developed according to the rules in that repealed ordinance.



*Dedication of the Lakeland Hills Park located on Evergreen Way SE. Among those present were representation from the Henderson Co., Auburn Mayor Bob Roegner and City Council members Jeanne Barber, Pat Burns, Rich Wagner, and Stacey Brothers.*

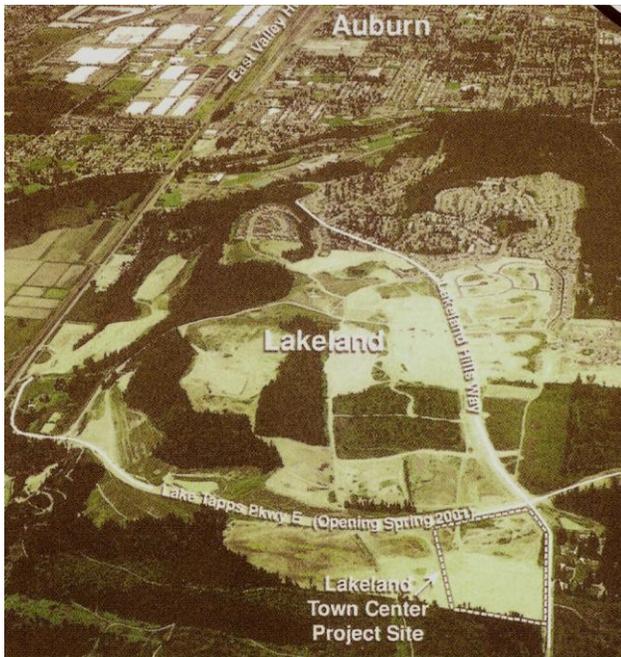
Henderson was the victim of a downturn in the economy in the late 1990’s going bankrupt and having to sell his Lakeland properties to the Tucci family investment company.

In the meantime, the Pierce County portion of Lakeland Hills was being planned by the County since Auburn had not yet annexed into Pierce County. When the Auburn City Council recognized the large scope of this addition to Lakeland, and the implications for water, sewer, storm drainage and transportation services, discussions began regarding annexation of the Pierce County portion to the City.

Since there were only a few residents in the area and annexation at that time was legal based on majority property area ownership, not necessarily the number of residents, the City proceeded with annexation negotiation with the land owners, Pierce County and the City of Bonney Lake which was already the provider of water services to most of the area. Long discussion ensued, finally culminating in agreements covering all services, construction standards, zoning, and fees to be paid by the developers.

Auburn is one of only a few cities in the state with residents in two counties, which necessitates City cooperation with twice as many County officials. With more than 6,000 Pierce county residents (out of a total Auburn population of 68,000) the City ranks 13<sup>th</sup> among Pierce County cities now and will probably rank about 6<sup>th</sup> a few years from now.

*The area map below depicts the status as this was happening*



*Lake Tapps Parkway, as a requirement in the Development process, here under construction*



Council members Gene Cerino and Rich Wagner regularly participate in Pierce County related groups in order to represent Auburn’s interests. City staff works with Pierce County staff on a frequent basis. Roger Thordarson, Chair of the City Transportation, Trails, and transit Committee, meets with Pierce Transit staff regularly and has recently negotiated the new 2009 Lakeland Hills commuter shuttle bus service.

**Recognizing that each of us remember the past with details that affected us individually, or struck our interest or involvement, the Lakeland HOA is pleased to modify the original article with the following facts added at the request of the Crabtree family.**

- ✓ **The bank on “A” St. SE. south the river was the Puget Sound National Bank.**
- ✓ **Most of the “colorful stories” attributed to Roland Crabtree were really about Mr. D.R. Crabtree (no relation) a neighbor whose address was 5300 “A” St SE. D.R. did work his property at all hours of all days.**
- ✓ **Roland Crabtree never worked on Sunday and earned a reputation as a devout Mormon.**
- ✓ **After Roland (Bill’s) untimely death, under the control of his wife, the remaining property was donated to Brigham Young University, recipient of the initial 500 acres given during the sewer phase of the project.**

