

EDMONDS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

THE PRESERVATIONIST

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PRESERVING WHAT REMAINS OF EDMONDS' FIRST WATER SYSTEM

Among the current projects of the Historic Preservation Commission is the Yost weir (water impoundment dams) in Yost Park, two concrete structures dating from the early 20th century which formed the headworks of Edmonds' first water system.

The story of Edmonds water system began with digging several wells on the town's periphery. But as Edmonds grew, the need for a more substantial water system became clear, and three companies were granted franchises: The L. C. Engel Company, The Edmonds Water System (financed by Seattle banker W. D. Perkins), and a third company represented by town founder George Brackett. The Edmonds Water System was the most successful in establishing water lines, to the point that the city decided to install several fire hydrants using this system (one of these hydrants can still be found on the corner of 4th and Main). But when the hydrants were connected in 1900, the water pressure proved too low for putting out fires.

Both Perkins' and Engel's water systems were purchased in 1902 by A. M. Yost and Sons, who merged them into The Edmonds Spring Water Company. The remnants of this system are still present in Yost Park. They represent a significant piece of our town's history, and thus are worthy of consideration for preservation.



The weir directed the Shell Creek flow into a pipe which fed into the main water system comprising an underground water main running west on Main Street. Homes and businesses could tap into this main for domestic water supply. (photo Sam Spencer)

The weirs however are a source of some contention because over the past century Shell Creek has worked its way around them, the combined result of concrete deterioration, erosion and recent heavy rains.

According to Joe Scordino, Project Leader of the Stream Team which works to restore salmon to Shell and other local creeks, this is causing Shell Creek to rapidly erode its banks and carry the resulting sediment downstream into salmon spawning

areas. Scordino believes that this sediment interferes with salmon spawning activity, and recommends that this situation be addressed by returning the stream to its original path. While repairs could potentially involve removal of the weirs, it is the hope of the Historic Preservation Commission that the stream can be restored and salmon spawning areas be protected while still preserving the historically significant weirs.

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The Edmonds Historic Preservation Commission is always on the lookout for homes to add to the Edmonds Register of Historic Places. If you live in or know of a home or building worthy of consideration, please contact the Commission by phone at 425-771-0220 or email at citizens-hist@edmondswa.gov

The mission of The Edmonds Historic Preservation Commission is to actively encourage the conservation and retention of the city's historic resources through a register of historic places, raise community awareness of the city's history and historic resources, and serve as the city's primary resource in historic planning and preservation.

ON THE WEB:

www.edmondswa.gov/government/boards_and_commissions/historic_preservation_commission

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Angie Feser, Director of Parks, Recreation and Human Services for the City of Edmonds, is looking into commissioning a study of the entire stream system within Yost Park, including the weirs. Feser believes that sediment affecting salmon spawning could originate from additional sources, such as runoff emptying from adjoining neighborhoods into Shell Creek. As an example, she points out that in addition to the weirs, a tree that fell into the stream during this past winter's storms is also causing erosion. But removing that single tree would require the city to obtain a SEPA permit from the Department of Ecology and a Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) from the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, which together could cost the city as much as \$10,000. Currently \$160,000 has been appropriated for a study of the stream in the 2023 city budget, and it is anticipated that this study will identify all threats to salmon restoration.



Installing interpretive signage would draw public attention and help inform park visitors about this piece of Edmonds history.

Meanwhile, the Historic Preservation Commission has requested that the small portion of the existing upper weir that contains the hole where water was diverted into the system of pipes that delivered it to the center of town be designated an historic landmark and preserved, provided it does not interfere with salmon restoration. A place for an information sign has been designated and awaits the

City Council's final approval.

There are not many cities that can point out their original water system, and hopefully Edmonds will be able to do so.

- Sam Spencer, Commissioner and Vice Chair



UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR THE REGISTER: 820 MAIN

The owners of this Craftsman home built in 1901 and located at 820 Main Street have submitted an application to add it to the Edmonds Register of Historic Places.

The Craftsman style is an American architectural tradition that emerged between 1900 and 1929. It is known for low-pitched roofs with protruding single or double gables and overhanging eaves, exteriors featuring intentionally exposed beams, brackets, and/or rafters, stained glass, and open front porches held up by thick tapered columns. Craftsman homes are generally one to one and a half stories tall, symmetrical or asymmetrical, with large bay or picture windows. Exteriors are typically painted wood siding, roofs are traditionally cedar shake shingles.

The Craftsman style developed as a less ostentatious alternative to the ornate Victorian style that preceded it.

There are a number of Craftsman homes throughout the Edmonds area. This one is in excellent condition and in a prime location.