Welcome to Longview . . . where history lives!

Longview is a planned city that was conceptualized between 1919 - 1922 when the Long-Bell Lumber Company purchased 14,000 acres of the Columbia River Valley bottom to build a mill site and accompanying town. Seventy thousand acres of timber were purchased for the Cowlitz Timber Company in Lewis and Cowlitz Counties, and Longview was born.

Founding father Robert A. Long, Long-Bell Chairman, and engineer Wesley Underwood envisioned a large-scale "planned" city that could accommodate 50,000 inhabitants. Construction of Longview began in 1922, and by 1927, much of the construction had been completed.

The City's design, representative of the City Beautiful movement, designated residential and commercial districts adjacent to the Civic Center. Boulevards with esplanades and wide streets were laid in the fashion patterned after Rome and Paris. In the 1920s, the entire Long Bell investment for the timber mills, railroads, and city infrastructure totaled $50 million. Many of R.A. Long's contributions to Longview actively survive today.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the City of Longview was born on the Cowlitz River, which was named after Thomas Jefferson's plantation.

Tour of the Civic Center

Monticello Hotel*, 1923

Built before all other buildings in Longview, this classic Georgian Revival hotel served to showcase the "Planned City." At the center of town "the Hotel," as it is known locally, has long been the focal point of community and social activities. It has a ballroom, lounge, and restaurant. The hotel takes its name from the first pioneer community on the Cowlitz River, which was named after Thomas Jefferson's plantation.

Joe Knowles Historical Paintings

Renowned landscape artist Joe Knowles was commissioned to depict historical events of the Pacific Northwest through a series of beautiful oil paintings within the fives of the lobby.

Squirrel Monument / Tree City USA - 1985

As a Tree City USA, Longview's abundance of oak trees means a healthy population of kid-pleasing squirrels. The abundance of oak trees means a healthy population of kid-pleasing squirrels. The giant squirrel statue at this location replaces the original one that split anchoring trees fell to disease, the City moved the bridge to its present location. The bridge is usually adorned with a lighted tree at Christmas time.

Longview Public Library**, 1920/1967

A personal gift from Longview Founder R. A. Long, the library represents the importance he placed of the city's cultural and intellectual growth. Its graceful Georgian Revival style includes one of the largest concrete domes in the region. The style was maintained when voters approved a major addition in 1966. Stop and have your picture taken at the bromo statue of a young library patron reading to her cat before heading up the steps and into the main reading rooms.

Koth Art Gallery, Town Space, and Children's Library

Take the stairs or the elevator to the ground floor and enjoy the ever-changing art exhibits in the Koth Art Gallery. Teems designed and painted their very own library-within-a-library in 2007. The Children's Library sponsors a summer reading program each year.

Nuttly Narrows Squirrel Bridges, 1963

Located up to the trees to view Longview's unique bridge just for squirrels. Because of the high mortality rate for squirrels crossing Olympia Way, local contractor and philanthropist Ann Peters built the world's smallest suspension bridge, bringing worldwide fame to Longview. After the anchoring trees fell to disease, the City moved the bridge to its present location. The bridge is usually adorned with a lithe tree at Christmas time.

© Longview Public Library, 2006

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Longview City Hall, 1941/76
3520 Broadway - Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Look up and to the left of the entrance to see the original crest of the City, done in bas-relief on the brickwork. It is a dome that was constructed from the original Civic Center plan for Georgian Revival designs, and the 1976 building remodel encases the original Art Deco style City Hall. Council chambers are on the 2nd floor, where the City Council sets policy and oversees the City Manager.

Historic Photos of Longview & Fountain, 1987
Historic photos detailing the early years of Longview line the first and second floors. Watch R. A. Long’s Planned City grow before your very eyes. The Vernal Roll, a soothing bronze fountain, is an invention double-headed axe in symbolizing logging and our natural environment. Take time to view the display case of gifts from our Sister City of Wako, Japan just inside the lobby doors.

Chamber of Commerce Building, 1949
1353 Olympia Way - Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
This triangular brick building became the permanent home for Longview’s chamber, originally located at Broadway and Commerce. Now it is home to the Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce, following the historic merger of the original chambers in 2004. Several brochures about Longview and local attractions are available here.

United States Post Office*, 1933
1625 Larch Street
Constructed during the Great Depression, it is to aid the local economy, this building combines classical style with Art Deco accents. Its intricate design matches old buildings around the Civic Center. Check out unique features such as the lobby: colored inlaid flooring, aluminum accents, gold leaf patterns in the walnut walls. As you cross the street to enter the Civic Circle, watch for unique features in the buildings around the Civic Center.

Plymouth Rock Memorial, 1926
SE Civic Center at Olympia Way
This beautiful piece was dedicated by the local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter as a reminder of the Monticello Convention of 1852 that was held near the mouth of the Cowlitz River. On your way back to your car, see if you can tell what time it is.

Sundial, 1939
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Huntington Family Monument, 1928
SE Civic Center at Olympia Way
A former Illinois state legislator, Seth Catlin settled his large family in the Cowlitz Valley in the early 1850s. He played an important role in Washington Territorial politics. The former estate of Catlin is now West Kelso. Read more about Catlin and his wife Agnes on this memorial stone.

Automobiles line the street during dedication of the “North to Olympia” marker (see marker D information below). The library is in the background.

Longview Historic Preservation Commission,
Cowlitz Today Community Calendar
Longview Downtowners
Monticello Hotel.
City Hall, or call 360.442.5092 and request a copy.

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