



# PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: July 26, 2010

## **106th Annual Skagit County Pioneer Association Picnic and Meeting Thursday, August 5 at Pioneer Park in La Conner**

SKAGIT COUNTY – The 106st Annual Skagit County Pioneer Association Picnic and Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 5 at Pioneer Park near the Rainbow Bridge in La Conner.

There will be live music, an old car show, historic pictures displayed for the Honored Families, and plenty of “old-timers.” There is no charge for the event, however, those wishing to register may pay \$2.00 for their annual membership fee in the Skagit County Pioneer Association and will also receive a colorful badge, ribbon, and other information.

At 11:15 am, the La Conner Civic Garden Club will provide a barbequed salmon dinner for the cost of \$10.00 per plate. Coffee, tea, and other beverages will be available through the efforts of the 4-H Craft and Critter Club of Anacortes, working to raise funds for special projects.

The Skagit County Historical Society & Museum will provide Skagit County historical publications and other items for purchase and will also field questions on county history. The Skagit Valley Genealogical Society will also provide answers and publications for any genealogical questions.

The Business Meeting of the Association will occur at 12:45 p.m. and will include an invocation, flag salute, and group singing. Association officers will provide brief reports and a memorial tribute for departed Pioneers. Honored guests will be recognized for their contributions to the Skagit Community, including the Ovenell Family of Skagit County as Pioneer Family of the Year, and Kevin & Patricia Paul as Pioneer Contributor. Elections for the coming year’s officers will also be held.

The Skagit County Pioneer Association was originally formed in 1891 but with requirements so restrictive that it soon came to an end. In 1904, a concerned group from Sedro-Woolley revived the Association under less stringent requirements, and the annual meetings and picnics have been held regularly ever since.

For more information, contact Dan Royal at 360-826-6141 or 360-929-5749.

For more information on the Ovenell Family and Kevin & Patricia Paul, visit [www.skagitcounty.net](http://www.skagitcounty.net)

### **The Ovenell Family and Kevin & Patricia Paul are honored at this year’s 2010 Annual Pioneer Picnic**

This historian has been given solicited and un-solicited opinions many times over the years that a Pioneer Association could very well be obsolete and dated as there are no longer living pioneers and

the old timer's who heard those stories from original early settlers of the Skagit valley are dwindling in number every year.

As the person who is privileged to memorialize – or remember – the passing of long time residents of Skagit County by tracking obituaries; I can share with you that there are countless individuals and families who still exemplify the pioneer spirit of our earliest settlers, founders of towns, politicians, clergy, owners of businesses, farmers, laborers, teachers, housewives, etc.

Our two families honored at this year's 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Pioneer Picnic August 5, 2010 at La Conner Pioneer Park by the Skagit County Pioneer Association demonstrate exactly the qualities and spirit the board of SCPA looks for every year. A spirit of looking outside oneself to build a life and future for their family and all the while, contribute to their community and county around them.

Honoring as '2010 Pioneer Family of the Year', the Ovenell family found their roots in the Pacific Northwest by arriving on Whidbey Island in 1858 and then to La Conner by 1876. Thomas N. Ovenell started a farm of his own in the Avon area and also a place by what is now Ovenell Road. He married Hattie Callahan in 1890 raising one daughter Bertha and four sons; James, Albert, George & Fred together. The family really made their mark as one of the best known progressive farmers in the county when they bought the acreage at the crossroads of Chuckanut Drive and today's Josh Wilson Road, a place they called Clover Leaf Farm.

The son, James T. Ovenell not only continued the progressive farming tradition while at the same time serving as one our many and finest farmer county commissioners, and then became elected to the Washington State House of Representatives from 1950 to 1958.

Not being content with just the one farm in Burlington James; along with H.O. Pierson bought more property on the south side of the Skagit River across from Concrete. It has been known as the Double 'O' Ranch for his son's Norm and Lyle who took over operation of both the Burlington and Concrete ranch's in the mid-1950's from their parents. By the late 1960's, Norm along with his wife Eleanor and daughters continued the operation in Concrete and it is still famous as the Double 'O' Ranch & Ovenell Heritage Inn.

In searching for '**Family Contributing to the Pioneer Spirit**', Kevin & Patricia Paul of La Conner and members of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community more than meet those qualities mentioned above. They are two people expressly devoted to their family, their community and the promotion and well being of their tribal community.

Kevin was elected and sworn in as Swinomish Senator in March 2006, is a well known master carver with three public works owned by the Town of La Conner, including the wonderful *Spirit Wheel*. He is a skilled drummer and singer and has generously consented to perform at this year's picnic. Kevin's wife Patricia, as busy as her husband, has served as a tribal judge throughout the state of Washington and became a member of the Washington State Bar Association in 2006. She volunteers in her community, state-wide, in Alaska and in South America.

Kevin and Patricia manage all this multi-tasking while raising an adopted son, Joseph Zuend, and a daughter, Katherine Paul in the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.

*Dan Royal is Historian of Skagit County Pioneer Association*