

The Barker Cabin
by
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**Prepared for the
Historical Society
of
Federal Way**



June 10, 2003

The Barker Cabin

Introduction

The Historical Society of Federal Way is restoring the Barker Cabin for public display at Historic Cabins Park next to West Hylebos State Park on 348th Street and Fourth Avenue South. This paper is intended to give a brief description of John Barker and his family, describe the building of a log cabin for use by him and his family on his homestead claim, and discuss why the cabin has been moved to its present location for preservation and restoration.

John Barker Family Background

Once called the “Ivied Cottage” because it was draped with ivy, the Barker Cabin is the oldest original structure in the Federal Way area.¹

John M. Barker was born on April 25, 1840 at New Haven, New York.² (His grave marker indicates he was born in 1841.³ The record in the card file of Mountain View Cemetery confirms that New York State was the birthplace.)

The Historical Society of Federal Way has in its files a typed version of an oral history of John Barker and his family.⁴ This appears to be by John Barker’s son, Claude and is dated May 30, 1958. Claude indicated the family left Nebraska on January 1, 1883 on the train, bound for San Francisco.⁵ (Another source says that John and his wife came to Tacoma from Chillicothe, Missouri in 1880.⁶ Still another source indicates the family left from Chillicothe, Ohio in 1880⁷) In addition to John and his wife, three children, Claude, Myrtice and Laura May came west.⁸ (Myrtice is spelled Myrtis in “Federal Way Pioneer

¹ Leila E. Brislin, “WEBB CENTER,” *Greater Federal Way News*, 18 June 1953, p.1 and “Barker Cabin,” *Federal Way*, brochure, (Federal Way: Federal Way Historical Society [sic], 1972), p. 1, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

² “Barker Cabin,” *Historical Gazette*, Historical Society of Federal Way Newsletter, December 1998, p. 1.

³ Headstone located at Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn Washington, located by Dick Caster, 21 October 2000.

⁴ Claude Barker, [*Short Oral History of Barker Family*], typed version dated 30 May 1958, pp. 1-4, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way. **The extracted and quoted material used in the body of this paper has been corrected for spelling, grammar, and typing errors found in the typed version referenced.** This Oral History is merely titled, ‘Claude Barker’ and is dated May 30, 1958. There is no signature, but it seems to be Claude Barker speaking in the first person and page 4 contains a photocopy of a Claude S. Barker business card. It appears someone other than Claude Barker has added the handwritten comments as they speak of Claude in the third person. It is not known who made the handwritten comments but the oral history was found in a file belonging to Ilene Marckx.

⁵ Barker, p. 1.

⁶ Leila E. Brislin, “Steel Lake,” *Federal Way Review*, 20 January 1955, p. 15. The *Federal Way Review* was a small paper published for about 18 months in 1955 and 1956 by the Federal Shopping Way Mall.

⁷ “Federal Way Pioneer Dies,” *Federal Way News*, 11 January 1967, Sec. 2, p. 6

⁸ Ilene Marckx [Appears to be author], untitled document with subsection titled Barkers, undated, p. 1, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way. This appears to be an oral history prepared and typed by Ilene Marckx. It is not known who provided the information to be typed. It appears it was prepared from the same collection of information as reference 4. It consists of two typed pages stapled together and found

Dies.”⁹ (Based on Laura May’s grave maker, Laura May was born on May 27, 1883¹⁰ so the comment she came west with the family may be of a general nature.) They arrived in San Francisco on January 7, 1883. They then took a boat, *the George Elder*, an old sailboat converted to steam, to Tacoma.¹¹

What with the stormy weather, we were 7 days getting to Tacoma. On arriving there, we stayed at Villard House (where the Tacoma Hotel is now located) and next morning our family stood gazing at Mt. Rainier which in the clear air looked close enough to reach out and touch. My mother remarked that she was going to take us kids for a walk up to the mountain, when someone told her it was 40 miles to that Mountain she says [sic] “We won’t go!”¹²

Claude Barker goes on to state that his “people” bought property’ in Tacoma at the corner of J and 12th. He says they built a home and lived there a short time (see below as to how this information might complicate knowing the date of when the Barker Cabin was built). Later they came by rowboat to what was then Buenna [now part of Federal Way] that he describes as “one great wilderness.”¹³

Debate Over Date of Cabin’s Construction

The source material available for determining when the Barker Cabin was built is about evenly mixed between the date 1881 and 1883. No day or month information is ever given. An additional quote from Claude Barker’s oral history is “We lived for several years in a log cabin (came in 1883) and had a garden and orchard because we were very much dependent on our own resources.”¹⁴ Based on the information given above in Claude Barker’s oral history it would appear that the family did not come to the area before 1883 and came to live in the log cabin in 1883. Therefore, the 1883 date would seem to be the correct one for the building of the cabin. Leila E. Brislin’s 1953 article is the oldest reference where the date of the construction is given. She uses 1883.¹⁵

The 1883 date does seem to have a contradiction, however, which might be based on input from Claude Barker himself in another source. By 1956 the Barker Cabin had been moved a short distance (see later discussion for details) to the Old Line Historic Park in the Federal Shopping Way Mall at the southwest corner of Pacific Highway South and South 312th. The Park was dedicated on June 15, 1956. The program prepared for the dedication had a short section on the Barker Cabin.

in the archives of Ilene Marckx. Ilene Marckx’s name is handwritten on the top. In addition to some material on the Barker family it contains short paragraphs on Libo, McNulty, Gail and Beede.

⁹ “Federal Way Pioneer Dies,” Sec. 2, p. 6

¹⁰ Grave marker at Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn Washington, located and recorded by Dick Caster 21 October 2000. The death date is recorded as December 5, 1960.

¹¹ Barker, p. 1.

¹² Barker, p. 1.

¹³ Barker, p. 1.

¹⁴ Barker, p. 1.

¹⁵ Brislin, “WEBB CENTER,” p. 1.

The Barker homestead cabin, built about a generation later [than a supposed Hudson Bay Cabin also moved to the Old Line Historic Park site], but eight years before Washington became a state, was the first white settler's home in this immediate area and is typical of pioneer architecture. The son of the builder, Mr. C. S. Barker, is still a resident of Federal Way. The cabin is not only genuine and authentic but is in excellent state of preservation. It's original location was on the homestead of which the Shopping Center is now a part, showing graphically the remarkably rapid growth of this area.¹⁶

Note the comment about the Barker Cabin being built eight years before Washington became a state. Washington became a state in 1889, so that would mean the cabin was built in 1881. Also note the comment that Mr. C. S. Barker (Claude Barker) still was a resident of Federal Way in 1956. It would seem likely that the information used in the program for the Barker Cabin probably was provided by Claude Barker, or at least he was available for the date to be checked. This might mean that the Claude Barker in 1956 believed the cabin was built in 1881.

Nikulla, in preparing a *King County Historic Sites Survey Inventory Sheet* in 1977 for the Barker Cabin, used a construction date of 1881.¹⁷ Nikulla prepared many of these site evaluation sheets for the southwest section of the county in the late 1970's. This reference by Nikulla seems to be the first to use the actual 1881 date although it is possible he extrapolated it from the dedication of Old Line Historic Park brochure which states the cabin was built eight years before Washington became a state. After 1977, references become mixed in newspaper and other accounts as to the cabin being built in 1881 or 1883. I suspect that all references to the construction date made after 1977 are based on either Brislin's 1883 date or Nikulla's 1881 date.

It is possible that the date of coming to Tacoma and the date of building the cabin have become confused. Reading between the lines it seems possible, but cannot be proven, that the Barkers came to Tacoma in 1881 and lived there about two years, then came to Buenna and built the Barker Cabin in 1883. That would seem to help explain the comment referred to earlier which indicates that the Barker family, when they first came to Tacoma, purchased property in Tacoma and lived at the corner of 12th and J before coming to Buenna. If they had come to Tacoma in January 1883, would they have purchased property in Tacoma and lived there for awhile and still had time to go to Buenna and build the cabin the same year? The answer is yes they could have, but it does seem to open up the possibility that the 1883 references of leaving Nebraska and arriving in San Francisco should actually be 1881(?). This also agrees more closely with Brislin's comment that they came in 1880.¹⁸ Based on the 1956 Old Line Historic Program comments with Claude Barker still in the area and available for input and the possibility

¹⁶ Program: *FOREFATHER'S DAY IN FEDERAL WAY AND THE DEDICATION OF OLD LINE HISTORIC PARK*, 15 June 1956, p. 2, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

¹⁷ Dwayne Nikulla, "The Barker Cabin," *King County Historic Sites Survey Inventory Sheet*, File No. 0007, 12 October 1977, p. 2.

¹⁸ Brislin, "Steel Lake," p. 15.

of the family having originally lived several months in Tacoma, it seems the 1881 date is possible for arriving in Tacoma and then the cabin was built two years later and Claude Barker over 70 years later got the dates of the two events mixed up.

Another indirect way of dating the cabin construction to 1883 involves the Homestead Act itself. Under the 1862 Homestead Act any head of household was allowed to file on a quarter section of 160 acres. The homesteader had then to cultivate and reside on the land for five consecutive years, at the end of which a final certificate and title would be granted to him.¹⁹ John Barker was granted title to his homestead on June 28, 1890.²⁰ With the title being granted in June 1890 and the five year requirement this would seem to favor the later 1898 date over the earlier 1881 date.

Until information that is more specific becomes available, about all that can be said is the cabin was built in the period around 1881-1883 although the 1883 date seems more probable to me.

Barker Cabin Location and Method of Construction

The Barker Cabin is an excellent example of the common architecture of homes built by the first settlers in the area. The cabin was the first house in the immediate area where it was built. It originally sat somewhere behind the location of the Federal Shopping Way Mall (now Pavilions Centre [sic]) which was located on the southwest corner of Highway 99 and South 312th Street.²¹ One source located it on French Lake Road (which became 312th) at the crest of the hill between what is now Sixth Avenue South and Eighth Avenue South.²²



The Barker Cabin about 1929 as printed in the *Federal Way Review*, March 17, 1955, p. 13.

The cabin is a sixteen-foot by sixteen-foot horizontal hewn log cabin with a high pitch shaken gable roof and small plain vertical plank door with a hand made wooden handle. The cabin has one large and two very small windows.²³

The log cabin was built with a cross-cut-saw, axes, sledges etc, to cut the logs up. The logs were chinked with thick moss held tightly into the crevices by additional smaller poles. It was very crude.

¹⁹ Scott, James W. and Roland L. De Lorne, *Historical Atlas of Washington*, (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 31.

²⁰ M. McKeaw, Secretary, Recorder of the General Land Office, King County Washington, *Homestead Certificate 2751, Application 5492*, given June 28, 1890 to grantee John M. Barker, recorded March 13, 1891, Volume 4, p. 445, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

²¹ Nikulla, p. 1.

²² Bill and Anne Ward, *Federal Way Historical Tour Brochure*, edited text, included in *Federal Way Historical Resource Manual*, prepared the Historical Society of Federal Way, April 1993.

²³ Nikulla, p. 1.

It had a chimney in the corner.²⁴

Claude Barker indicates, “in 1890 we moved to a ‘lumber’ house.”²⁵ Brislin indicates this new lumber house was called the ‘Manor House’.²⁶ (There is some evidence that the Barker’s continued to live in the log cabin even after the lumber house was built. They may have used the new house as a workshop for a few years.)

Family lived in the old Barker cabin until 1897 or 1898. Mrs. Webb told Mr. Barker “You have a better workshop than a house.” The “lumber house” was actually built for a workshop but the family continued to live in the cabin for [sic] sometime later.²⁷

Claude Barker states, “We took up a homestead in Sec.8, Twn 21, Range 4E. We proved [completed the government requirements for obtaining title to the land] the homestead and Benjamin Harrison signed the deed.”²⁸

Brislin indicated that John Barker filed for homestead rights before building his cabin.²⁹ Claude Barker describes how his father John, Max Ketchan³⁰, George McChett and Gust Durell all filed for homestead rights and built cabins at about the same time. The four men got a map from the King County’s surveyor’s office and with a pocket compass, located their homesteads. The state had surveyed the area a couple of years before Barker came to the area.³¹

One day we [Barker, Ketchan, McChett and Durell] saw a smoke coming up from the far corner (N. E.) of what is now Steel Lake. We were not sure whether someone had come in there but we fired three shots and received three shots in answer. We knew we had a new neighbor.³²

After developing the 160-acre homestead site for several years, Mr. Barker received title to the land effective June 28, 1890. The title to the land was recorded for grantee, John Barker, in paperwork processed by the Recorder of the General Land Office representing King County at 4:58 P.M., March 13, 1891.³³ The wording to this title to the land is included as Appendix 1.

²⁴ Barker, p. 1.

²⁵ Barker, p. 1.

²⁶ Brislin, p. 15.

²⁷ Ilene Marckx [Appears to be author], Untitled document with subsection titled Barkers, p. 1.

²⁸ Barker, p. 1.

²⁹ Brislin, “Steel Lake,” p. 15.

³⁰ Different sources, see later references, use various spellings such as Mccham and Metchan for this name. It would also appear that McChett could be a misspelling of one of these names.

³¹ Barker, p. 2.

³² Barker, p. 2.

³³ M. McKeaw, Secretary, Recorder of the General Land Office, King County Washington, *Homestead Certificate 2751, Application 5492*, given June 28, 1890 to grantee John M. Barker, recorded March 13, 1891, Volume 4, p. 445, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

Steel Lake Land

When John Barker moved into the area the United States government owned much of the land. After the land was surveyed in the early 1880's the area around Steel Lake and surrounding acreage was transferred to the Northern Pacific Railway Company as a land grant in payment for bringing the railroad into Washington Territory. The Northern Pacific Railway Company subdivided their land sections and sold tracts, most of which were 40 acres in size, to private individuals. The last two 40-acre tracts were located at Steel Lake. These were sold to Mrs. John Barker in 1902.³⁴

It is not known as to why this land was purchased in the name of Mrs. John Barker rather than John Barker himself. "J. M. Barker and his wife separated about 1906-1907. He was a mean old devil and drank prune wine which may have caused much of his trouble."³⁵

Claude Barker, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Barker apparently inherited these 40 acres. Mrs. Leila Brislin, recalled in after Clude Barker's death in 1967 that "following his retirement in 1930 from the Seattle Post Office he [Claude] sub-divided 40 acres of timberland on the north and south shores of Steel Lake, which had belonged to the Barker family since the early 80's." Claude Barker, on one of the lots at Steel Lake, had a rustic cabin erected and made it his home. From this Steel Lake home he conducted the first real estate business in what is now the Federal Way area until 1960.³⁶

Daily Living

The Barker family first took their water from what is now called Easter Lake across South 312th Street. Even after they got a well they used the lake for irrigation and washing clothes. Early maps call Easter Lake, Mcachem's Pond or Shorty's Pond. Shorty Mcachem was known for hiring out his large team of horses to clear stump land.³⁷

Claude Barker adds that they dug a well at the edge of Max Metchan's swamp and used it for two or three years. They then dug a well 31 feet through the hardpan right at the house. Claude Barker indicates that Max Metchan's cabin was just about where the Fisher House now stands. Metchan was a tinsmith and a carpenter who worked in Tacoma. Metchan, McChett, and Durell all came in and took up homesteads at the same time. They took properties, which were quarter sections and lived on the same adjacent corner so they would be near each other as neighbors. All of them, including Barker, proved up their homesteads. "As for their livelihood, no one had much income." All helped each other with their problems such as digging wells, raising cabins, etc. Claude stated, "things got pretty thin sometimes." George McChett was a carpenter. "George Durell was a sea-faring man – went out to sea, but came back often enough to hold his homestead." Each of the neighbors got his patent deed.³⁸ [Note: As mentioned in an

³⁴ Brislin, "Steel Lake," p. 15.

³⁵ Ilene Marckx [Appears to be author], untitled document with subsection titled Barkers, p. 2, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

³⁶ "Federal Way Pioneer Dies," *Federal Way News*, 11 January 1967, Sec. 2, p. 6.

³⁷ Bill and Anne Ward, *Federal Way Historical Tour Brochure*.

³⁸ Barker, p. 1.

earlier footnote Metchan or even McChett might be a different spelling for the Mcachem mentioned above.]

Lots of trees were six, eight and even ten feet in diameter. Logging was done by small companies, three or four of them often doing a 160-acre section. There was a narrow gauge railroad that used a wood burning steam engine. In 1890 the Carlson brothers had a mill at Steel Lake. This was one of the first mills in the area. It used timber found immediately around the mill. The crew was David Carlson, manager; Olaf Carlson, engineer; August Johnson, sawyer; and Charlie Johnson, teamster.³⁹

I recall playing on the boom logs as a kid. They made a road from the mill to Stone's Landing [now Redondo], which was later taken over by the county – roughly followed the route of the present canyon road.⁴⁰

There were many loons on the lakes but hunters killed these off. Cougars, black bears and deer were also present. “The most I ever shot was a bob-cat.” Lakes with no connection to the sound or another river had no fish. “Steel Lake had no fish but later on someone introduced carp. These persisted until the lake was stocked by the state about 30 years ago [about 1928].”⁴¹

John Barker's Involvement with Early Schools

Arthur Steel (the e was dropped from the original spelling, Steele, during the platting of Steel Lake), Taylor Webb and John Barker were directors of the first Steel Lake School.⁴²

The school was taught by Mr. Olson. It was an 18 foot x 20 foot room and had 13 students. As I [Claude Barker] recall no grades were differentiated – we were taught the three R's. The teacher was boarded by Mrs. Jennie Webb as were nearly all the teachers. . . .

Steele wanted the school built north of Steel Lake near his property, but the two others [Barker and Webb] prevailed in their opinion and the location finally selected was more in the geographical center of the then population. . . . He [Steele] never did own property on the lake and probably those who feel it is a historical injustice to call it Steel Lake are right. Others wanted it called Silver Lake . . . when it was to be platted the name Steel Lake was too well known by then . . .

We [Claude Barker speaking] went there for several years, then a nice school was built at Buenna which had about 50 students. We went as far as we could at S. L. [Steel Lake] then continued grammar school at Buenna. After that my grandmother went [with] me and my sister to the Acme Business School. This helped me pass the Civil

³⁹ Barker, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Barker, p. 4.

⁴¹ Barker, p. 3.

⁴² Barker, p. 3. ‘Arthur’ has been changed by a handwritten comment to ‘Orville’. This was probably not done by Barker, but by someone unknown – see footnote 4.

Service exams for the Post Office. Only 23 out of 167 passed the exams. They were very difficult in that they asked questions on obscure places and things, things that you would never need to know in actual practice on the jobs they were filling.⁴³

Roads

The first roads in the area were built by the early settlers themselves. John Barker and Taylor Webb were leaders in getting roads built. John Barker was involved with much of the early road building in the area. One road was developed for use by the four families needing to go from what is now South 312th Street to Buenna.⁴⁴ [The four families are probably the Barker, Ketchan, McChett and Durell families mentioned above who developed their homesteads on adjoining land.] There are several additional documents from 1890 and 1891 in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way that discuss the building of this road. Since these are records filed with the county they locate the road by section numbers and are hard to analyze so they will not be discussed here. This road probably started near the Barker homestead. This road was known as the Barker Road for many years. An undated, unsigned one and one-half page typed paper titled 'BARKER ROAD' describes the Barker Road.⁴⁵

The Barker Road was [built] in the 1890s. Homesteaders up on the top, that is, where 312th is now, had to have a way of communicating with the beach for passenger service, for services, and supplies, for mail and in reverse, markets for their products via the steamers that plied between the various docks and other stopping places.

So – the Barker Road was a well-known trail, probably more of a rudimentary road – at least. My husband says in 1941 [when] we first bought the property at 312th and Hy [sic] 99 we drove over the length of it – it may well have extended on the south side of the Barker homestead, to communicate with the other homesteaders Webb and Libo.

Up on 312th it is bisected by the stub of 7th Ave. So., a private road. From 4th Ave. it proceeds west for a couple of blocks as an easily identifiable pattern across the back of several properties. It is again bisected at 6th avenue by a blind street, then proceeds in a manner not known to me at least without the platting map, or more detailed historical maps.

The time for saving the entire trail or road is past. When the plat came up for approval in March 1976, Councilwomen Beatrice Stern tried to save something of the road. According to information of her secretary reaching

⁴³ Barker, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Barker, p. 2.

⁴⁵ No author, "Barker Road," undated, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way. This one and one-half page typed document was found in a file belonging to Ilene Marckx and it refers to the author and her husband buying land in 1941 at the corner of 312th and Highway 99 so it is assumed the author was Ilene Marckx.

me, she first tried to require the developer to leave the corridor as a bicycle path. But no one supported her from this community so she finally had to give up and let the developer (Douglas Webb) have the plat as he wanted it.

. . . [In trying to ascertain the location of the old school and the road] I stopped in again but no one was home in any of the homes between 4th and 6th. On another late day coming back from the Rogers' Mrs. Wise was home and she affirmed that it [the Barker Road] did run across the back of their property and others. I asked her if she would show it to me the next day with Marie Reed. She showed it to me. It continued for a couple of blocks west. About half of the way west (to 6th) stakes had been driven into the path [these belonging to] the developer who intends to put through a 60 foot road following the existing King County Barker Road corridor to serve his plat.⁴⁶

The author [Ilene Marckx (?)] goes on to say she tried to get others interested in saving the remnant of the road including councilman Barden, but found no one had any interest. The developer reworked the remnant of the road to meet his purposes.⁴⁷

The road from the Barker homestead to the location of where Highway 99 is now was built by Metchan and Barker in 1890.⁴⁸ An affidavit of Publication indicates a request was made to extend this road to Slaughter (now Auburn). The request was by Barker and eleven others (none of whom were Ketchan, McChett or Durell).⁴⁹ There are several additional documents from the 1890s in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way that discuss the proposed building of this road extension. Since they are records filed with the county they locate the road by section numbers and are hard to analyze so these will not be discussed here.

John Barker's Death

As with other events in John Barker's life there is some confusion about the date of his death. The *Historical Gazette* indicates John Barker died on his Federal Way farm on October 6, 1928.⁵⁰ A much better source concerning his death is available at the cemetery where he is buried. John Barker is buried at Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn Washington. His headstone credits him with being a 'Washington Pioneer.' The dates given on the headstone are 1841-1929.⁵¹ Records in the card file of Mountain View Cemetery indicate his death was on October 5, 1929 from senility. He was buried on October 8, 1929.⁵²

⁴⁶ No author, "Barker Road, pp. 1, 2, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

⁴⁷ No author, "Barker Road, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Barker, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Affidavit of Publication*, Requested by M. L. Sherpy, publisher of Slaughter Sun, 2 May 1891, witness by 'unreadable signature', for Clerk Board King County, State of Washington, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

⁵⁰ "Barker Cabin," *Historical Gazette*, p. 1.

⁵¹ Located and recorded by Dick Caster, at Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn Washington, 21 October 2000.

⁵² Card file and log book kept at Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn, Washington.

Claude Barker as a Real Estate Broker

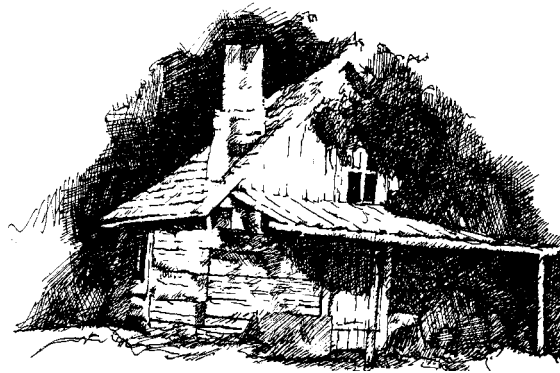
Claude Barker went to work with the Seattle Post Office and retired from this job in 1930.⁵³ Claude Barker evidently ended up selling real estate as the business card he was using in 1958 indicated he was a broker for a company called “SUBURBAN PROPERTIES between Seattle and Tacoma”.⁵⁴ Claude Barker apparently got his start in real estate by selling the two 40 acre plots of land around Steel Lake he inherited from his mother (see the earlier section on **Steel Lake Land**.) Claude Barker is also buried at Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn Washington. His headstone only gives his name, but the records of Mountain View Cemetery indicate Claude was born in 1878 and died on December 20, 1966 and was buried on December 22, 1966⁵⁵.

Cabin Moved to Federal Shopping Way Mall

The Barker Cabin was the original inspiration for J. R. Cissna’s Old Line Historic Park when he built the Federal Shopping Way Mall in the mid 1950s. This park was to be one of the many scenic attractions in association with the shopping mall. John Barker’s children, Claude Barker and Myrtice Barker Wells who still owned the cabin in 1955 sold it to J. R. Cissna.⁵⁶ In 1955 the cabin was moved from its original site a short distance to the Old Line Historic Park. The program for the June 15, 1956 opening of the Old Line Historic Park indicates the Barker cabin was one of three structures available at the Historic Park initially.⁵⁷

Cabin Moved to Historic Cabin Park

In 1989 the city of Federal Way purchased four acres of land next to West Hylebos Wetlands State Park, just off South 348th Street and 4th Avenue South. The purchase was part of King County’s 1989 open space bond issue.⁵⁸ In April 1991, Shirley Charnell, President of the Historical Society of Federal Way, wrote a letter to Cheri McCabe of the Federal Way Parks Department and to the Federal Way City Council members requesting the city council “declare a resolution that the Denny Cabin is of historic significance to the city of Federal Way and it along with the Barker Cabin should be moved



Sketch of the Barker Cabin by Tim MacDonald, based on a photograph that appeared in the *Federal Way Review*, March 17, 1975, p. 13, in the files of the HSFW.

⁵³ “Federal Way Pioneer Dies,” Sec. 2, p. 6.

⁵⁴ Barker, p. 4.

⁵⁵ File Card in records of Mountain View Cemetery, Auburn Washington and headstone located by Dick Caster, 21 October, 2000.

⁵⁶ “Barker Cabin,” *Historical Gazette*, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Program: *FOREFATHER’S DAY IN FEDERAL WAY AND THE DEDICATION OF OLD LINE HISTORIC PARK*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Sean Robinson, “Old cabins may find new home at Hylebos,” *Federal Way News*, 17 June 1992, p. A1.

and preserved for a future historic park to be incorporated in the city parks plan”. She also requested the city help in the removal, storage and future restoration of the cabins.⁵⁹ On May 21, 1991 the City Council of Federal Way made a resolution that the Denny Cabin and the Barker Cabin have special historical significance.⁶⁰ In February 1993 Peter Joufflas representative of the new shopping mall owners gave permission for the Historical Society of Federal Way to move the cabin from the shopping mall.⁶¹ On Saturday September 18th 1983 the Barker Cabin was moved by volunteers from the shopping center to an area near the West Hylebos Wetlands at the 348th Street and 4th Avenue South.⁶²

Restoration of the Barker Cabin

The cabin is now in the process of final restoration along with the Denny Cabin. The two cabins will make up Historic Cabin Park. At the September 7, 2002 Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of Federal Way, President Ed Opstad made the following comments about the reconstructed Barker Cabin:

After dozens of work parties over the past several years, the cabin has finally passed city building inspections and is nearing completion. Key assistance in the completion of the cabin came from the Federal Way Kiwanis Club. About a dozen members volunteered to work on the cabin ten or a dozen occasions. These volunteers completed the cabin roof with Don Hagen splitting all the shakes, totaling over a thousand. Future work to be done includes fabrication of windows, installation of a fireplace, and placing a wooden floor over the concrete pad. We will then outfit the cabin with period accurate furnishings.⁶³

⁵⁹ Letter, Shirley Charnell, President of the Historical Society of Federal Way to Cheri McCabe, Parks Department and Federal Way City Council Members, *Moving & Storage of Historic Cabins*, 29 April 1991, in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

⁶⁰ Debra Ertel, Mayor, *City of Federal Way Resolution No. 91-60*, 21 May 1991.

⁶¹ Letter Peter Joufflas, Federal Way Shopping Center to Shirley Charnell, Greater Federal Way Chamber of Commerce, *Federal Way Shopping Center – Barker Cabin*, 10 February 1993.

⁶² Sean Robinson, “Historical society moves 1880’s-era cabin,” *Federal Way News*, 23 September 1993, pp. A1, A8.

⁶³ “Annual Report 2001 – 2002,” *Historical Society of Federal Way*, 7 September 2002, p. 2.



The Barker Cabin as Restored in 2002

The sign currently on the Barker cabin reads as follows:

The Barker Cabin

The Historical Society of Federal Way is restoring this historic building. This cabin was built by John Barker on a homestead he claimed near Mirror Lake (formerly French Lake) west of the present Pacific Highway South. Sources vary as to its date of construction between 1881 and 1883. In either case, it is one of the earliest buildings in the area now known as Federal Way.

The cabin is an example of a style of architecture unique to the western slope of the Cascade Mountains, the area where Western Red Cedar grew in abundance. Split cedar cabins were fairly easily constructed using materials at hand without need for great skill or much time. The pioneers learned by observing Indian construction that cedar had wonderful properties of rot, insect, and fire resistance and was easily worked using tools available to the pioneers. As time passed, this style fell out of favor when sawn lumber became readily available and old growth cedar became scarce and expensive.

The Historical Society of Federal Way is restoring the cabin to its early 1880s condition. It will be used as an exhibit in the Historic Cabin Park. Plans for this park are being developed as a cooperative effort with the City of Federal Way, the state of Washington, the Friends of

West Hylebos Wetlands, and the Historical Society.⁶⁴

Currently (June 2003) the fireplace and chimney are being reconstructed in the northwest corner of the cabin.



Volunteers working on roof for Barker Cabin restoration

⁶⁴ Prepared by Ed Opstad, President, Historical Society of Federal Way, 2000, in the files of the HSFW.

Appendix 1 - Typed Copy of John M. Barker Homestead Title⁶⁵

Cover

74822

USA⁶⁶

To Jno. [sic] M. Barker

Filed for Record at Request of Grantee

MAR 13, 1891

At 58 min: past 4 o'clock PM

And recorded in vol. Two at Patents page 141

Records of King County, Wash.

T. A. Twichell Co. Auditor

[\$] 1.00 Paid

Mail (to) Buenna Wash

Main Page

The United States of America

To all to whom these presents [sic] shall come, Greeting [sic]:

Homestead Certificate 2751

Application 5492

Whereas There has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Seattle Washington Territory, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress approved 20th May, 1862, "To Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental, thereto, the claim of John M. Barker has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the South East quarter of Section eight in Township twenty-one North of Range four east of Willamette Meridian in Washington Territory containing one hundred and sixty acres.

According to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the Surveyor General: *Now know ye*, That there is, therefore, granted by the United States unto the said John M. Barker the tract of land above described: To Have and to hold the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances [sic] thereof, unto the said John M. Barker and to his heirs and assigns forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts, and also subject to the right of the proprietor of a vein or lode to extract and remove his ore therefrom, [sic] should the same be found to penetrate or intersect the premises hereby granted, as provided by law.

In testimony whereof I, Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the seal of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the twenty eighth day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety, and of the independence of the United States the one hundred and fourteenth

By the President: Benjamin Harrison

By M. McKeaw, Secretary.

(Unreadable first initial) Townsend, Recorder of the General Land Office.

Recorded, Vol. 4, Page 445

⁶⁵ The original is in the files of the Historical Society of Federal Way.

⁶⁶ Items underlined are handwritten in the original.