



# Behind the Scenes at the Keller Heritage Center

Volume VI, Issue 1

January 2010

Stevens County Historical Society

## *Got an Empty Building on Main Street?*

by Glendine Leonard

Preparations are now underway to showcase paintings of the flamboyant painter, Leno Prestini. The exhibit will include all of the paintings that are owned by Stevens County Historical Society as well as the sketches, WWII cartoons, sculpture, painted gold pans, and notes of his brother Battista. SCHS also will display the notebooks of the glazed terracotta plant of the Washington Brick Lime & Sewer Pipe Company in Clayton. The museum shows some of these works each year in the learning center but it takes much more room to show it all. Trusting that one building will be

available we plan to show the complete collection this August 7-22 somewhere on Main Street, Colville.

Where have the paintings been since Leno Prestini's death in 1963? Battista Prestini, Leno's brother, had a museum in Clayton for several years and after his death his wife came to open the museum during Clayton days. Then all the paintings were taken to the Los Angeles area for storage. Chewelah Arts Society contacted Cathy Johnson, grandniece of Leno, and brought them up to Chewelah to show in 2004. As Battista requested

that the collection be kept all together, it was given to the society and stored at the museum. This summer, Glendine Leonard, the librarian for SCHS went to San Francisco area and brought back the last group of paintings and one gold pan as Mae died last July.

To all members of the Stevens County Historical society please get involved in this project. Preparing the paintings and other materials for display, preparing the building wherever it is, or guiding visitors through the collection.

## The Colville Indian Agency Headquarters Building

The four descendent families of Dr. S. P. McPherson have unanimously agreed to gift the log cabin to the Stevens County Historical Society. Now the work begins! Their great-grandfather, Dr. Samuel P. McPherson, an early area physician, made many contributions to the community which have long gone unrecognized, including the land donations for the city pool, museum, little league field, bowling alley (originally city owned), and a church. See more on this cabin on p. 3.

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## Around the Grounds

by Marvin Ray



A new Prestini acquisition. Prestini did not title this painting, so Glendine calls it "Cabin after Van Gogh."

Due to weather conditions, there has been little activity on the grounds. Consequently, all activity has been concentrated on the museum itself.

We are working on repairing and improving display cases and the actual displays. Katie Tolin has improved and changed the Post Office area and it looks very nice. The Colville Post Office has provided a few new antiques for the display. The school display case has been rebuilt using some old and some new lumber. It also looks very nice.

The area around the music display is being remodeled and a new front of the display has been changed to a solid wooden wall and has been painted green. The Barber Shop is being changed around too. Plans are being made to change the fronts of the General Store and the Women's Clothing sections.

Museum visitors should be quite pleased with all the improvements.

## Curator's Corner

We still do not have a full time curator and with as much going on as we have here it seems unlikely we can find one to carry the load alone. Perhaps a team of specialist curators will work better. For now, we are keeping up and trying to figure out exactly what would work the best.

Marvin still curates the military area and Connie Richart and Katie Tolin are working like crazy on other displays they think need work, and there is always

something that needs work. Facelifts are being done on the school display and the music store. Wainscoting was salvaged from an old house in town and is being reused as wall covering in the school walls. New wood floors and a new hairdo on the mannequin will add to the new look. Salvaged clapboard siding is being used on the school display exterior and on the exterior of the music room. If we can find the right materials the logging and mining displays will get new fronts also.

So many ideas, so little time and money. We hope that everyone is enjoying the new look of the displays.

Michele Stewart has joined staff to help with the photographs. It is wonderful having her aboard. Her mother, Grace Young was the first curator here in this building and the layout of the displays that tell the story of the county was her vision.

## 2009 Christmas Tour Report

The Christmas Tour was outstanding. Each year I doubt that it can be more beautiful or more creative and more wonderful or that the cookies could be better, that the music would be better, or that the Gingerbread Houses could be any cuter. And each year I am surprised. Although not better, each year has had such a special charm and beauty about it that I am speechless at the talented people willing to help. This year the theme was White Christmas. One of the hits of the decorations was Shannon Rawlay's marshmallow wreath. I think Grady is going to find a link for it to put on the web page so you can see it. It really is cute enough to eat. The web site, if you want to see it or make it is, <http://www.hottie-biscotti.com/blog/2009/12/05/marshmallow-wreath/>

Thanks to all who helped and all who came. Since we were having computer problems at the time of the tour I didn't get a "program" of artists and helpers done, so I am enclosing it here. I hope you will thank them when you see them. Marlene Fredricks can't be thanked enough for decorating and recruiting so much talent to help her.

## Membership Makes a Difference!

It seems like every organization is suffering with the down economy. Sadly that is true of the Historical Society also. We would like to encourage you to remind your friends and businesses you frequent that membership in the society really helps the community. The primary program of the society is the Keller Heritage Center including the museum, historic house, and many other historic buildings and features. It also keeps the history of the county in its library and makes it available for research.

## A Beautiful Lady Turns 100

The Keller House is 100 years old this year. Doesn't she look good for her age? This fall some time was spent under the front porch leveling and stabilizing it. Then the floor sanding people came. It was so beautiful after the sanding that we were convinced to seal it and some kind of clear finish will be put on in the spring. Insulation is being installed in the third floor attic too and the west bulkhead will be replaced.

Jodi Roberts has agreed to be the Chair of the Birthday Party event this summer—it's going to be GREAT!!

## The Historic Colville Indian Agency Cabin/Headquarters

(From Page One)

For several months the Historical Society has been in discussion with the owners of the Historic Colville Indian Agency Cabin in Chewelah for the transfer of ownership of the cabin to the Historical Society. It has been in their family since Dr. McPherson purchased it from the government in 1902. There aren't any family members left in the area to care for and use the building and grounds so they contacted the Society about the possibility of assuming ownership.

The board voted at the January meeting to accept the property so we will

be moving forward with the transfer and then the hard work begins.

It has been 108 years since it has had public access and use so there is no real history of what the possible uses would be. The ideas of the family are such things as restoring it to its previous condition inside and perhaps a library or museum or some other historic use. Preservation is high on everyone's list.

The building has for many years been on the National Register of Historic Sites and has been documented and written about several times. Also in the possession of the family is a collection of

papers dating back to the early 1900's that would also be available to the Historical Society to copy and keep in its archives.

The task of changing it from private ownership to trying to make it somehow available to the public is huge and will be a long, time consuming and expensive task. The building is such a local as well as a national treasure that we must be very thoughtful and careful in its use. We are hoping for lots of community support and input and of course lots of helping hands to make this the premier facility we know it can be.

### *President's Message*

by Janet Thomas

Everyone is recovering from the Christmas Tour and back at it full steam ahead.

This weather has been a real help to our funds. We paid what seemed like a fortune last year and a somewhat smaller fortune the year before removing snow, both from the ground and the roofs. This winter only twice so far and no roofs.

We recently received notice from Gerry Fredrickson that she will no longer be working on the maps and extracting from the newspapers. I wanted to remind everyone what an asset she has been to the museum and the library over the many years she has served here. She has worked hours on end here in the

back room making research easier for us and for the public. She is a dear to be around and a tireless worker. I think she inherited some of that from her mother, Goldie Entwistle, who worked as a tour guide into her 90's. We will miss Gerry's work and her personality and wish her well in all she does.

This next year we will also miss Pearl Mance who worked as a tour guide. She took on a much bigger job as a city councilperson and we are delighted that she volunteered to take on the job as liaison between the Historical Society and the City. We will miss her a lot as a guide, and are glad we will still be working with her.

## A Welcoming, New Entryway for the Museum

As tour guides sit every week waiting for patrons to come in they sometimes find themselves bored. On one such occasion two of them were thoughtful about their surroundings and felt they were in serious need of being updated and made more welcoming. As always, money is an issue, so it might take a while to get it all done, but, we are pressing onward. The first phase is to get everything out of it and put a little texture on the walls. Then paint, and picking a paint color is not small job.

Then the entry will be the new home of the Kettle Falls photographs. To interpret the development of the county

the Falls are what brought everyone here. Millennia ago it is what brought the Native people here and later it is what brought the Europeans here. The Northeast corner of the state became the earliest inhabited by Europeans. Jaco Finley was sent by the fur trading company shortly after Lewis and Clark explored the West. When David Thompson came in 1811 he found a few Europeans already settled in the area.

This gives a good flow of displays from the geology display through Kettle Falls on to the Native American displays.

All of this could be done with

very little cost and mostly labor. The floor covering is the costly piece and will have to wait until money is available. The plan is good and will make a good replacement for the spots where the first carpet (1976) and the new carpet (1993) connect in very awkward places. It also caused us to think about floor covering in other places. We will have plans ready so that when money comes available we will be prepared.

No matter how much gets done this year, it will be clean and fresh and a new look and a new display area that is more welcoming and roomy.

Give the Museum a financial boost—Send us your email address!!!

We are working on creating an online, email version of the Newsletter. Send us your email address and we'll send your copy of the Newsletter to you in a pdf format. It will save the Museum both copy and postage costs, plus you'll get your Newsletter instantly! Send your address to [schs@ultraplix.com](mailto:schs@ultraplix.com) and put "Email Newsletter" in the subject line.

Stevens County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 25  
Colville, WA 99114

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Stevens County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 25  
Colville, WA 99114

**How to Reach Us**

Office Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 AM to 1 PM

Phone/Message Number: (509) 684-5968

Email: [schs@ultraplix.com](mailto:schs@ultraplix.com)

Website: [www.stevenscountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.stevenscountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Address: P. O. Box 25  
700 N. Wynne St., Colville, WA 99114

Museum Hours:

May & September: 1 PM to 4 PM  
June, July, August: 10 AM to 4 PM (Mon.-Thurs.)  
1 PM to 4 PM (Fri.-Sun.)

October through April: Museum & Keller House Tours  
By Appointment.

Research Library Hours:

Wednesday: 10 AM to 1 PM  
Thursday: 1 PM to 4 PM (limited services)

If you need other hours, please call the museum to arrange a different time.