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The Clayton ♦ Deer Park Historical Society's

Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats

— or —

*Bits of Chatter, Trivia, and Notices
— all strung together.*

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The Lelifeld Terracottas: With one very special Christmas 1930 tile.

— article by Wally Lee Parker —

— With contributions by Mike Reiter, Bill Sebright, and Ken Westby —

... Philip brings a bag of terracotta artifacts ...

The images began arriving via email in the late morning of Tuesday, August 13th, 2024. Four of each were attached to two messages from society president Bill Sebright. The first email carried the cryptic note, “*I’m saving the best for last*” — likely meaning the images yet to come would be the most interesting. The message with the second posting read, “*The 1930 Christmas tile is about three and a half inches by six and a half inches. The turtle is about three and a half by five inches. Phil’s dad, Arnold Lelifeld, used to rest his pipe on the turtle. Arnold was Clayton’s postmaster for many years.*”

I returned, “*Doubtless there’s more to this story.*”

Bill responded, “*When Phil Lelifeld came to our usual Tuesday breakfast at the Deer Park Zip’s today, he had a sack — a plastic gift bag — with him, and now you’ve seen the contents. I’m curious to see what Ron Endlich has to say about the Christmas tile, and whether he thinks Leno Prestini had anything to do with it.*”

Regarding the latter hoped for opinion,

all the emails Bill and I were exchanging on this subject included a Cc (carbon copy) to Ron.

Ron Endlich, a resident of Seattle, has an unusual leisure-time obsession, that of art tile historian. Within his collection he has some remarkable examples of the decorative tiles created by Washington Brick & Lime’s terracotta works and is particularly interested in those that can be attributed to Clayton’s Cecil Sater and Leno Prestini. For an example of the quality of Ron’s research, see the *Further Reading* box below.

Regarding the get-together at Zip’s Drive-In, Bill explained that for a couple of years now a group of guys would get together at Zip’s for an informal breakfast meeting, the intent of the group apparently being to gossip, and then, when such seemed worthwhile, involve themselves in this or that bit of community improvement. As Bill wrote, “*The group is always looking for tasks to take on. This is the group that moved the society’s terracotta eagle from the parking lot of the old Clayton Burger to its present location at Clayton’s fairgrounds.*”

As to the artifacts Philip brought to the breakfast klatch, one was simply a lump of fired

Further Reading.

“A Hidden Gem: The WaCo Tile Mural at the Stevens County Courthouse.”

— by Ron Endlich —

Mortarboard #137, September 2019 — page 1921 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 40.

https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_137__web_.pdf

clay. We're not sure what that's all about, since other than squeezing a handful of raw clay into an irregular mass, no apparent attempt had been made to sculpt or smooth the surface of the results. Of course, I have some nicely glazed "ashtrays" my kids made in grade school that as far as shape is concerned would do Pablo Picasso or Salvador Dali proud. That said, for some reason this amorphous lump was fired and kept.

In this collection here's one small tile — about 2 by 3 inches — fired with a white glaze. We're assuming it was either a showroom sample, a glazing test, or was rejected due to an apparent surface blemish. The letters WACO were impressed into the unglazed back prior to firing. WaCo is something of a contracted acronymization of the name Washington Brick & Lime Company. Also — this assumedly being added after firing — was the application of a code, possibly catalog, using some type of ink or paint marker. The code reads D1195.

Also in the collection is a small turtle. This greenish glazed artifact measures 3½ by 5 inches. The letters M and A have been scratched into the underside. Though it's reported that Leno Prestini, as well as others, fired smaller private works in the unused nooks and crannies of Clayton's ceramic kilns, the only thing we can document regarding this artifact is that having been used as a pipe holder by Arnold Leliefeld it was clearly in existence during his time at Clayton. Other than that timeframe, nothing regarding its place of manufacture, or the process — a handcrafted work or having been pressed into a mold — is currently known.

And that brings us to the Christmas tile now part of our society's collection.

On August 30th, Bill and I received the following message from Ron Endlich. *"Nice to see another example of a WaCo Christmas tile. I believe A. B. Fosseen commissioned the tiles to give away as ceramic Christmas cards to family members, employees, and customers of the Washington Brick, Lime, & Sewer Pipe Company. I have several in my collection; they date from at least 1929 to 1933. Other holiday greeting 'cards' were also made but are undated. I believe they were designed by Leno Prestini."*

The rationale behind Ron's last comment was explained in an article he published in the spring 2019 issue of the Tile Heritage Foundation's magazine, *The Heritage: A Review of American Tile History* — said article titled *WaCo; Washington Brick, Lime, and Sewer Pipe Company's Greeting 'Cards' and Other Commemoratives*. Ron notes that Leno's artwork had certain stylistic traits that could be mirrored in





Washington Brick & Lime Company Christmas Tile for 1930.

Commissioned by A. B. Fosseen for distribution in lieu of traditional Christmas cards.

Ceramic tile — 6½ x 3½ x ¾ inches.

Donated to the Society by Phillip Liefeld from his family's collection of keepsakes.

various of Fosse's greeting cards. But then Ron also noted that 'most' of the greeting cards produced at Clayton carried no names or other markings indicating the name of the artist responsible for creating them.

Ron mailed a copy of 2019's magazine to the society for inclusion in our archives. Among the tiles pictured in his article are two duplicates of the same image recently donated to our society. While one of the 1930 ceramic Christmas cards pictured in the magazine carries the same rather flat two-tone glaze over the low-relief impression as our card — making it a true duplicate of our card as pictured on page 101 — the other card appears in a lighter buff background shade with the characters and their clothing painted over with colored glazes.

This donated greeting card is an excellent example of the depression era artwork being created at Clayton's terracotta. And the society deeply appreciates Philip Leliefeld's donation of it to the society.

... tracing Clayton's Leliefeld family ...

The Leliefeld family's documented roots go back to the birth of Arnold's grandfather, John Leliefeld, that in the Netherlands on the 16th of November, 1843. Arnold's grandmother, Marie Adelaide (Schneider) Leliefeld was born in Germany in 1850. Both passed away in Iowa. Marie in 1888, John in 1889.

It appears John and Marie had at least two children. One was Henry Herman Leliefeld — Arnold's father — the other, Gerhard Leliefeld.

We believe that Gerhard's first name was John, like his father's — though it appears this younger John seldom used his first name. He was born at Petersburg, Iowa on May 5th 1879, and passed away on the 16th of November, 1962. He had been a longtime resident of the Springdale community by his time of death and is interred in that community's cemetery. Reportedly he and his wife, Catherine (Moser) Leliefeld, were married in 1903. As for when they arrived in Washington, an article revealing such appeared in the November 28th, 1953 edition of the *Spokane Chronicle* — said article celebrating the couple's golden wedding anniversary. The newspaper carried this quote, "*They were married in Guttenberg, Iowa, and went to Springdale in 1907 and have lived there ever since, first on a farm and now in the town. He is a retired farmer and logger*"

A bit later in the 1953 *Chronicle* article, the family connection between Gerhard and

Henry is cemented with this. "*One of Mrs. Leliefeld's sisters, Mrs. Louise Leliefeld, Springdale, who attended the wedding 50 years ago, was also at the anniversary reception. She married Gerhard's brother, the late Henry Leliefeld.*"

As for Henry, according to his October 10th, 1942 death certificate, Henry was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on the 8th of February, 1874. His obituary, this from the October 17th issue of the *Colville Examiner* says, "*Henry Leliefeld, long-time resident of Lyons Hill, died Monday in Spokane. Besides his wife, Mrs. Louise Leliefeld, he leaves four sons, Alfred and Arnold in the Armed forces, Harold of Springdale, and Oliver at home; one daughter, Mrs. Florence Brown, and several grandchildren.*" The paper also notes, "*Alfred and Arnold Leliefeld, both serving in the armed forces, attended the funeral.*"

Regarding the abovementioned Lyons Hill, that is a geographic feature centered about 4½ miles southwest of Springdale.

The above Arnold Leliefeld was born at Springdale on September 14th, 1915. Very little print has been located regarding his early life. Among the first found was this, datelined "*Springdale, Wash., June 26,*" from the same day's issue of 1942's *Spokane Chronicle*. Under the header "*Three Join Army,*" the article simply said, "*Harry Charbonneau, Arnold Leliefeld, and Johnnie Brown left today to join the armed forces.*"

In December of 1945, the *Spokane Chronicle*, beneath the dateline "*Springdale, Wash., Dec. 29,*" reported that "*Floyd Shaw and Arnold Leliefeld are the latest soldiers to arrive home from overseas service. Mr. Shaw coming from the South Pacific, and Mr. Leliefeld from Germany.*"

And then another article with a Springdale dateline, this printed in the Wednesday, June 4th 1947 edition of the *Spokane Chronicle* announced that "*Miss Irene Dellinger, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Dellinger of Clayton, and Arnold Leliefeld, son of Mrs. Henry Leliefeld, were married Sunday in Spokane.*"

Arnold and Irene had two children — Alaine, born in the summer of 1948, and Philip, born in the summer of 1951.

On the 8th of July, 1950, the following appeared in *Spokane's Chronicle* under the dateline "*Washington, July 7 — President Truman has sent to the senate the nomination of Arnold L. Leliefeld as postmaster at Clayton.*" On July 31st the *Chronicle* noted that the United States Senate had approved said nomination. And with

that Arnold, who had been Clayton's acting postmaster since June 30th, 1948, officially became the town's 10th postmaster.

On July 14th, 1975, the Spokane Chronicle said "*Clayton, Wash. — After 27 years of service, postmaster Arnold Liefeld has left this position because of health and gone on extended sick leave. He was appointed postmaster in 1948. Liefeld is succeeded temporarily by Clarence Glassbrenner, currently clerk in charge, but who will retire soon.*"

And then this appeared in the *Spokesman-Review's* November 4th, 1975 funeral notices. "*Liefeld, Arnold — Resident of Clayton, Wash., for 28 years, passed away November 1st in Spokane. He was born in Springdale and*

worked at the Post Office for 27 years in Clayton. A veteran of World War II. He is survived by Irene Liefeld at the home. One son, Phillip Liefeld, Okanogan, Wash; one daughter, Elaine (Liefeld) Petty of Spokane; one brother, Oliver, Springdale; numerous nieces and nephews. ... Interment Springdale Cemetery."

Arnold's son, Phillip Liefeld, is a 1969 graduate of Deer Park High School. He graduated from Eastern Washington University in 1973 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice. He served with the Washington State Patrol, retiring in 2011. He currently lives in the Loon Lake area.

Missives & Miscellaneous Bits: Notices, Notes, and Shiny Things Unearthed.

— by the Editor and Others —

... Leno's first job at Clayton's terracotta ...

I found an article about Clayton artist Leno Prestini in the December 7th, 1958 issue of the *Inland Empire Magazine* — that at the time being a Sunday supplement to the *Spokesman-Review*. The article, penned by "Pat Graham of Colville," appears to have been drawn largely from an interview with Leno. I'm assuming the author was Patrick Graham, son of Colville's Charles Graham, then publisher of the *Statesman-Examiner*. Patrick would go on to follow his father as publisher of said newspaper.

Leno told Mr. Graham that his father, Luigi Prestini, had told him about the easy money clay modelers could make, so, at age 19, Leno "*walked in and asked to serve an apprenticeship at the Washington Brick and Lime plant at Clayton.*" Leno turned 19 on the 4th of February, 1925. As for the ease of Leno's hire, Leno's older brother, Battista, had a somewhat more involved take — that recorded by regional historian Jack Nisbet in his 2015 book "*Ancient Places: People and Landscapes in the Emerging*

Northwest." Jack recorded that Battista, then working in the terracotta department "*pressing tiles as piecework ... arranged for Leno to come and join him ... as an apprentice.*"

In Mr. Graham's Sunday supplement article, he quotes Leno as saying, "*My first work was a cornerstone for the Waitsburg High School. They gave me that job only three days after I applied for an Apprenticeship.*"

Walla Walla County's Waitsburg is currently a town of some 1,200 souls about 120 miles south by southwest of Deer Park. And the vintage Waitsburg High School — the one under construction in 1926 and completed in 1927 — is still standing.

Looking in the school's application for placement on the National Register of Historical Places, we found the following. "*A cornerstone just above the foundation on the north end of the north wing bears the Masonic scale symbol and reads: Laid by the M. W. Grand Lodge of F. & A. M. 1926.*" A little later the application states, "*The cornerstone was laid on July 20, 1926 by Walter M. Meier, Grand Master of the Grand*

Further Reading.

"Leno Prestini: Pioneer Era Deer Park as Seen Through the Eyes of the Artist."

— by Wally Lee Parker —

Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats #6, June 7th, 2024 — page 57.

https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/letters_brickbats_newsletter_006.pdf

Lodge of the State of Washington, F. & A. M. 1926.”

A little research deciphered the alphabet soup above as, “Laid by the Worshipful Master Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons 1926.”

So, according to Leno himself, that was the first piece of Clayton terracotta officially formed beneath his hands as an employee of Wa-Co. If some kindhearted soul happens to be in the vicinity of what appears to be a very handsome historically significant brick and terracotta school in Walla Walla County, we would be grateful if they might manage to take several photos of Leno’s cornerstone for the society’s archive.

... Halloween in the good old days ...

This from the November 5th 1907 issue of the *Spokesman-Review*, under the dateline “Elk, Wash., Nov. 2 — Very little damage was done by the Halloween boys and girls on account of the ole-fashioned Halloween social given by the ladies’ aid at the parsonage. Most of the old folks were children again, playing all kinds of pranks and old-fashion games. The hit of the evening was the fortune telling by two of the ladies.”

The following isn’t within our usual geographic area of interest, however, as Halloween pranks go, this one is just too good to pass up. From the November 3rd, 1910 issue of the *Spokesman-Review*, this, under the dateline “Pomeroy, Wash., Nov. 2 — Frank Cardwell, one of the proprietors of the J. N. Cardwell & Sons’ merchandise store here, while going home

from business Halloween evening, observed several boys struggling to put a gate on the cross-bars of an unsound telephone pole. The pole was shaking from the weight of the boys and to help the affair along Mr. Cardwell stopped for a moment and steadied it. Upon arriving home, he was surprised to find his own gate gone — and now Mr. Cardwell is planning to brace the telephone pole and recover his gate.”

As for a dateline closer to home, there’s these bits from the *Spokesman-Review*’s November 2nd, 1911 issue under the dateline “Loon Lake, Nov. 1 — The depredation committed in Loon Lake on Halloween, under the guise of innocent fun, went far beyond that definition of sport of any kind.”

For example, “The barn of F. B. Mitchell & Co., general merchants, was entered during the night and the delivery horses were taken from their stalls and ridden out into the wood, where they were tied to trees and were found shortly after noon today.

“Near the central telephone office two buggy wheels were hung on the wires in such a manner as to put the line entirely out of commission and there was no service in or out of town today until a lineman could be summoned from Spokane to repair the damage.

“The better class of citizens are most pronounced in their condemnation of the numerous outrages and all state that they will do everything in their power to assist in bringing the guilty parties to justice.”

Maybe it’s just me, but I don’t recall Halloween ever being quite that rough.

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