

The Mortarboard's 100th Issue

THE
CLAYTON/DEER PARK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mortarboard

Issue #100 — August — 2016

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The C/DPHS is an association of individuals dedicated to the preservation of the history of our community. To the preservation of the region's oral history, literary history, social history, graphic and pictorial history, and our history as represented by the region's artifacts and structures. To the preservation of this history for future generations. To the art of making this common heritage accessible to the public. And to the act of collaborating with other individuals and organizations sharing similar goals.

Six Letters: Translating the Luigi & Caterina Prestini Letters of 1919

Part Two of Two.

A Group Project

by

*Wally Lee Parker,
Paul Erickson, John & Angela Barbieri, and Christina Percoco*

For some time the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society has had in its possession six letters exchanged between Clayton's Caterina and Luigi Prestini shortly before Luigi's death in early 1919. Following is the story of the letters' donation to our group, of their translation from cursive Italian into English, and what they have to tell us about the parents of Battista and Leno Prestini.

... the letters ...

The Prestini letters are just a small part of the history of the town of Clayton — just a small fragment of the easily misplaced kinds of bric-a-brac occasionally laid aside for safekeeping due to someone's sentimentality, and in doing so saved for future generations. But unlike many such bits of everyday history,

these particular mementos, these particular letters, are especially notable for their humanity — a quality most anyone who has had to deal with the degree of loss described in these missives can sense and attest to.

The words captured in the Prestini letters comprise a sad keepsake, a tearful reminder. The letters comprise a quiet story of life and death — or at least of taking breath



From "The Coast" magazine, April, 1907

See Yourself in Print.

The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society's department of Print Publications is always looking for original writings, classic photos, properly aged documents and the like that may be of interest to our readers. These materials should be rooted within, though not limited to, northern Spokane County, southeastern Stevens County, and southern Pend Oreille County. As for types of materials, family or personal remembrances are always considered. Articles of general historical interest — including pieces on natural history, archeology, geology and such — are likely to prove useful. In other words, we are always searching for things that will increase our readers' understanding and appreciation of this region's past. As for historical perspective; to us history begins whenever the past is dusty enough to have become noteworthy — which is always open to interpretation. From there it extends back as deep as we can see, can research, or even speculate upon.

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— the editor —

A print copy of this issue of the Mortarboard is or soon will be available in booklet format.

*Ask about
"Collected Newsletters: Volume Twenty-Eight."*

Free — Take One

The C/DPHS meets at 9 a.m. every second Saturday of the month. Join us at the Clayton Drive-In, Clayton, Washington. Visit our website at <http://www.cdphs.org>

after breath while confronting a strong possibility of death.

Being aware of the hurtful circumstances within which the family was tangled when these letters were written, we anticipated that some deeply emotional moments were likely threaded through them. But knowing for certain would require translating the letters' cursive script from Italian to English. For that we'd need the assistance of individuals literate in both languages and specifically literate in the form of Italian spoken and written in the geopolitical region the Prestini family originally called home — the village of Besano, located in the Province of Varese, itself located on the western edge of the Lombardy administrative district of northwestern Italy. The objective of the translation would be to extract the original meanings from Luigi and Caterina's written words, and then recast the essence of those meanings in a way English speakers could appreciate.

This suggests that translating from one language into another is so much more than simple word substitution. It's an act of creative composition. In this case it was accomplished by three knowledgeable individuals working collaboratively — New York's John and Angela Barbieri, and Philadelphia's

Christina Percoco.

After seeing the translated text, our suspicion regarding the expected tone of the letters seems largely confirmed.

Our assumption has been that the Prestini's — Luigi and Caterina — were not well educated in the formal sense. The economics of small-town Italy during the era in which they were schooled made primary education beyond the most basic a luxury. However, after reading the translations our impression is that there's an innate intelligence evident in both our letter writers. Though their formal education may have been limited, they seem to have made the most of it, and then endeavored to continue their education on their own.

As a practical matter, if you wanted to communicate over any distance in late 19th century Italy (and most everywhere else, for that matter), you had to write — or have someone write for you. And as most any struggling writer will confirm, clarity is a skill that tends to improve with practice. Looking at their compositions, our translators concluded that both Luigi and Caterina — but especially Caterina — were well practiced in the art of stringing written words into meaningful sentences. And on top of that, both were good

Opening Date for Lewis & Clark Sanatorium Found

— date adds another layer of puzzlement to sanatorium story —

In the first part of this article (issue #99), we noted that we had yet to find an opening date for the medical facility to which four of the Prestini letters were addressed. Since then the following short announcement was located in the March, 1917, issue of The Modern Hospital — at that time a national monthly magazine with editorial offices in Chicago, and publishing facilities in St. Louis, Missouri.

The announcement read ...

“The Lewis and Clark Sanatorium was opened at W. 2404 Second Avenue, Spokane, Wash., in February, by Drs. N. L. DeLong and Lucy Maurer. Dr. DeLong is a graduate of medical colleges in Philadelphia, Pa., and Naubeim, Germany.

Dr. Maurer received her medical education at Ann Arbor, Mich. The new institution will accommodate 35 patients.”

An online search for further information regarding Dr. N. L. DeLong and Dr. Lucy Maurer proved unproductive. We'll continue to check on this going forward.

at writing in a formal form of cursive that also requires practice — though once again, Caterina was especially good. Which is to say that Christina's composition, as well as her handwriting, appears generally crisp. Luigi's less so. As to what degree Luigi's physical condition at the time his letters were written may have played into that, we can't really say.

The six letters, both Caterina's and Luigi's, were all posted in duplicate envelopes — envelopes similar enough to suggest that all were from the same company, if not the same box. Each is six inches wide by three and a half high. The shapes of the sealing flaps are all the same. All have a return address written on the back flap — those from Caterina to be returned to Box 154, Clayton, those from Luigi to be returned to what we believe to have been his brother Ferdinando's address, East 316 Sprague, Spokane.

All the envelopes, and the letters they contain, are naturally aged to something of a sepia tone — just as one would expect for correspondence posted nearly a hundred years ago. Our intent going forward is to file these materials inside archival plastic sleeves, hopefully preserving them for many more years.

The only editorial changes made to the translations received from our volunteer translators has been the occasional addition of punctuation and paragraph indentations — and this only when it appears as if such would make the translations easier to understand. Anywhere notations or further discussions have been added to the stream of text, they are separated from the translated text either by parenthesis or by placing the discussions in their own paragraphs. These inclusions are further differentiated from the text of the letters by printing all the translated words in italics, and all the added material in standard typeface.

... the first envelope ...

We don't know when Luigi first entered the Lewis & Clark Sanatorium, but expect it wasn't too long before Caterina sent

him the following letter.

This letter's envelope contained three pieces of paper. One appeared to be a receipt written on a physician's prescription pad, another appears to be a physician's address written on the back of a bank deposit form. It's not clear whether these items were original to the letter, or added later for safekeeping. Scans of both can be found in part one of this article (*Mortarboard #99, page 1305*), along with a discussion of their possible significance.

Caterina's letter — actually just a short note — was penned in ink on one side of an unlined, five by eight inch piece of better quality writing paper.

In the upper margin at the beginning, this first letter carries the date “21-2-19” — February 21st, 1919.

“My dear husband,

“Pardon my saying, but you know very well my personality. I can't find peace, day or night. I beg you, if you can, to write a few lines on a white piece of paper on how you are. I embrace you dearly together with the children.

“Your Caterina.

“If you don't wish that I write to you, let me know and I will stop.

“Be strong. Everything will pass.

“Goodbye.”

... the second envelope ...

Dated “26-2-19” — February 26th, 1919 — this letter was again written with ink, but this time on both sides of a ten inch by eight inch piece of lined though much lower quality writing paper.

“My dear husband,

“Immediately I reply to your note with deep anxiety (this alluded to “note” is not among the six Prestini letters in the society's collection, and is currently presumed lost). Tell me why you let yourself become depressed and discouraged. You don't know how long it

took the sickness to worsen, and it is impossible to know how fast you will get better.

"Maybe you don't have faith in the doctor. Didn't he tell you to stay for a month there, and so it is still early. Maybe later on you will get better.

"Cheer up. Don't lose faith. The way instead is to get courage and try to eat as much as you can. You need to get strong. You will see that by getting strong things will get better.

"I don't say that it won't take long. Poor thing. You have suffered a lot and you find yourself also very tired. But if you let yourself get depressed from the pain, everything you have gained until now will be worth nothing.

"Have courage for us three and our companionship. God knows how much I would pay to see you cured. Even I would give up my life. The worst thing is that I can't be near you.

"In fact I got sick on Sunday after I returned home. I got a fever with chills followed for three days with high fever followed by a strong cough. It was worse than when I thought I had the influenza and I was sick for the entire week. Now I can assure you in spite of the sickness I feel much better together with the children. Only if you lose courage I will lose it too.

"Stay strong. On Saturday I will visit and bring with me everything you requested. I would like to write to you more, but at present I don't know what to say, except to tell you again to have courage. I kiss you many times passionately together with the children. Always your affectionate wife.

"Caterina

"If you continue to get discouraged, I will be forced to come and stay in Spokane and bring the children. But if it is necessary, I will come willingly.

"Goodbye again and kisses."

... the third envelope ...

Caterina's letter, again scribed on an

eight by ten inch sheet of common lined writing paper, is dated "3-3-19" — March 3rd, 1919.

"My dear husband,

"It is a short time since I have been there, but I thought of writing often. This way the time will seem shorter. What are your thoughts? I am sorry if on Saturday I didn't bring you the valise. I saw that you got upset and you received me a little cold, but Fred (Ferdinando Prestini, Luigi's brother) had just arrived. He always has something to do. I was waiting and at that moment heard the wagon. He had to run out to stop it. (We're assuming this occurred while Caterina was staying at Ferdinando's Spokane residence, and that the "wagon" referred to was some kind of public transportation. We know Ferdinando's address since it was written on the back of Luigi's two envelopes to Caterina.) Giovannina (Ferdinando's wife) called me in a hurry, because I was in the other room. I had the valise ready in the kitchen and in the confusion I forgot it."

"You will know better this time to let the barber visit. This way he can do your hair. It is too much work for you to even shave. When you have less it's not so bad. Give the dirty clothes to them and when I come there I will wash them there. Remember that the underwear and the undershirt are in a paper bag there.

"How are you now? The head still hurt? Have patience if the pain doesn't advance I don't think you will have to stay there until you are fully cured. Make sacrifices ..."

Caterina's scripting moves from the front of the paper to the back at this point. Upside-down in the top margin of the back page, she adds the apologetic notation "Sorry for my sloppy writing. I have a bad nib that goes wherever it wants." Our assumption here is that she was using a dip pen, wetted in a bottle of ink, to scribe this letter — as well as the others. The deepening and dwindling of the intensity of the black ink traced across the paper would seem to confirm that this classic

type of pen, rather than a fountain pen — the latter being very expensive at the time — was being used.

On the back page the body of the letter continues, "... like I am making sacrifices. I ask you to do the same because I also suffer not having you near. But I live in the hope to see you someday not suffering anymore. It will be long, but don't give up. You need patience and try to eat slowly. Take the time to chew the food well before you swallow and it will be better.

"Be strong. I will write to you immediately. And don't worry even though I am far away. Day and night my thoughts and my heart is always with you.

"We are all well. If it isn't bad, the next time I come I will bring with me the children. I repeat again for you to be strong. Having the children all home I only do minimal shopping. Pretty soon the summer comes, the kids are growing and we will all three try to do something. Don't let yourself cry and don't think of us. Try to be strong, if you want to get better. Do it for us.

"Goodbye. I kiss you dearly twice even for the time that I came and I couldn't kiss you. Also our kids send you kisses.

"Always your affectionate Caterina."

... the fourth envelope ...

The fourth letter, dated "3-6-19" — March 6th, 1919 — is from Luigi and addressed to "Mrs. Caterina Prestini, Clayton, Wash., Box 154." This is the only letter in the group with an exterior postmark that is legible as regards the date.

"Dear wife,

"I reply to your letter, received with great pleasure, hoping that it will find you in good health together with the children."

Leno had turned 13 on February 4th, 1919, and Battista would be turning 15 on the 24th of September.

"Regarding my headache, I always have it very strong like Saturday night. I had

it all night till Sunday morning, then they gave me a powder to drink and then it went away.

"When you married me, and on Saturday, I weighed 131 lbs. Sunday instead only 130½, went down only ½ lb. Monday I weighed 131½. Tuesday didn't go up. Wednesday I weighed 132½. Thursday 132¾, only ¼ more."

The original Italian text also used numerical symbols as opposed to the written form.

"I still have the pain in the stomach like before when I was home. Like ants below, I still feel them. The headache is my company. I don't have too much appetite to eat. I don't write this to make you feel sad nor to hide it. I don't have other persons in this world other than you to write about it and tell you how I am. Nobody would believe that I am sick. I look better in the face because I look fat and have beautiful color. But below, I know how I feel.

"Don't despair dear wife, at present I can't console you regarding any improvement. I myself breathe day and night always with the hope to feel better someday. I don't pretend to be cured, but at least to have a little improvement. To be able to write to you and give you courage together with the children. Who knows when I will start to feel better. But as soon as I start to feel better, I will immediately write it to you.

"Yesterday the doctor came. He told me that I don't look any more like the men of before. He didn't say anything else. He will return again Sunday to see me.

"They see me with a good color and a weight gain, but my beautiful color fools everybody and who suffers is me poor dog. Believe poor wife, I write to you exactly how I feel. Writing how I am is better than when you are here in person and talk, because when you are here I can't talk how you want to. Write to me whenever you want to and I will respond right away. And I will tell you the truth on how I feel.

"I don't have anything else to tell you at the moment. I send you a kiss together with

the children.

"Yours, Luigi Prestini.

"Bye. Give yourself courage more than me."

... *the fifth envelope* ...

The fifth envelope contains three sheets of paper. The first, Caterina's letter to Luigi, is written on both sides of a lined, eight inch wide by ten inches high sheet of common writing paper. The second, signed either N. Seal or N. Leal, is on one side of a five and a half inch by eight inch lined paper. And the last, with a few scribbles in pencil on an otherwise blank, unlined surface, is a five and a half by eight and a half inch piece of paper torn from a larger sheet. The only words scribbled on this otherwise blank sheet — in English and without punctuation — are "*Spokane March the 5 1919.*"

As regards the above noted piece of mostly blank paper, our current assumption is that it was either intended as writing paper for Luigi, or was a scrap of some sort that found its way into the envelope in the intervening years. Whichever, the whereabouts of the other half of the torn paper is clarified when discussing the contents of the sixth envelope.

The reason for the second missive — the one signed either N. Seal or N. Leal — is outlined after the conclusion of Caterina's message.

Like Luigi's letter from the fourth envelope, Caterina's missive in this fifth envelope was dated March 6th. Although Caterina's letter appears to be a reply to Luigi's letter of the same day, if we assume the dates attached to both letters are correct, that seems problematic — unless, of course, Caterina obtained Luigi's letter the same day it was postmarked, and then replied immediately.

While considering the above, we can't rule out the possibility that Caterina was replying to one of Luigi's letters posted prior to March 6th, and since lost.

As noted before, of all the letters, Luigi's missive of March 6th is inside the only

envelope with a legible postmark. Therefore it's the only one we can reasonably confirm as having been sent the same day the letter inside was dated.

It's something of a puzzle. Though, considering that all the letters Luigi and Caterina exchanged were dated in the upper margin, most certainly not as large a puzzle as we could have been left with if those dates had not been applied by the writers.

And here, dated "3-6-19" — March 6th, 1919 — is Caterina's last letter.

"My dear husband,

"I am quickly replying to your letter, which was received with much pleasure. While it doesn't bring me comfort, it at least gives me the pleasure of feeling close to you. Tell me, do you always have strong and continuous pain? I am sorry to hear that you always have the headache. Maybe it is because you are always in bed. Can you stay up a little bit after you have eaten?"

"I beg you not to be taken by doubt. You should try to act as if not ill.

"I will write to you more often. If I would know that it wouldn't annoy you, I would even write to you every day. Receiving a letter is as if you are here.

"Be strong. I believe the pain that you must feel, and that I would willingly carry your pain if I could take it away a little. But that is impossible my dear husband. I am unfortunately convinced that it will take a long time, and therefore you can't give up.

"There are illnesses that last for years and then get cured.

"Again I beg you to be strong. It is worth more than anything. Don't try to think of anything else other than getting better. There is a remedy for everything.

"Legrezia has written to me. (Though rare, this apparently Italian name is sometimes used as a feminine first or middle name. It also seems to occasionally appear as a surname.) She tells me that as soon as you feel better, to pack my bags and come to them. This way we will share both happiness and

misery together. She also sent a note from her husband that I will include in this letter. Let me know how I should answer her.

"Stefano (appears written as Stefane in the Italian script) sent her a registered letter. A red postcard signed by Enori (appears as Enni in the Italian script), a sign that they have received it, was returned to me. But I haven't had a reply from home. Till now I haven't received anything.

"Josephine writes to me almost every week. She always asks how you are.

"Everybody asks about you here (apparently speaking of Clayton), especially the Americans. The people that you know and even the people that don't work in the factory always ask the boys about you.

"I would write to you a lot of things, but at present I don't know what else to write. I kiss and hug you many times together with the children. Regards from Carlo and Lena. Again be strong, and remember me as I remember you.

"Always your affectionate wife, Caterina."

In the above letter Caterina writes that, "*Legrezia ... sent a note from her husband that I will include in this letter.*" The note was indeed enclosed, and has been translated as follows.

"Following Ella's letter (which was not enclosed — and which seems to suggest that the above Legrezia was also known as Ella), I add some words myself, hoping to give you comfort in the sad times that you are going through. Putting the suffering aside, and taking into consideration our meager circumstances, we could still help you in some way. We don't have anything else to write.

"Wishing you a speedy recovery followed by a lot of courage, that only us poor people can understand. I leave you, my cordial regards together with my family.

"Yours, N. Seal (or N. Leal)."

Evidence on hand tends to suggest

that the Prestini's were communicating by post with friends and family in Barre, Vermont, and also the old country — as well as others more local. At some point in the future the society may be able to sort this out. But as of now, we'll have to leave things as is.

... *the sixth envelope* ...

This last letter, from Luigi to Caterina, covers two pieces of paper. The first piece is eight and a half by eleven inches, unlined, and covered on both sides with script. The second, an eight and a half by five and a half inch piece of unlined paper and with the appearance of having been torn from a larger sheet of paper. This sheet was only written on one side. It appears that the missive on this second piece of paper is a continuation of the missive written on the larger piece of paper — such reinforced by the fact that Luigi's signature appears only at the end of the script on the smaller piece of paper.

And yes. The torn edge of this half sheet matches the torn edge of the nearly blank half sheet found in what we've designated the fifth envelope — Caterina's letter.

Like Luigi's March 6th letter, his March 9th letter appears to be written in pencil.

Comparing Luigi's handwriting between these two letters suggests a few things. For one thing, the handwriting in his first letter appears much more controlled. Part of that is doubtless due to the fact that the March 6th letter was written on lined paper — therefore the size of the scripting was contained. And also on the fact that it appears to have been written using a pencil containing a fairly hard graphite. The March 9th letter was on unlined paper — so the lines drifted to a degree, and the size of the lettering was not as contained. It's also possible the softer graphite pencil used in the second letter necessitated larger curves in the cursive in order to keep the lettering clear.

All the above considered, it's also notable that Luigi's handwriting became progressively worse in both letters as the missives

continue. While that's not uncommon in longer cursive letters, we can't rule out the possibility that the growing weariness of his deteriorating condition is showing.

That said, what follows — dated "3-9-19" — March 9th, 1919 — is a translation of what we currently believe to have been Luigi Prestini's last recorded words.

"My dear wife,

"I am late answering your letter for the reason that I wanted to see what the doctor had to say.

"He came to see me today and asked if I feel better than when I came here. I said the truth that I feel the same as before. Then he said to tell my brother to go to his office at 2:30 today. Then I telephoned my brother, Ferdinando, and told him to go to the doctor, to see what he has to say.

"Ferdinando went, then he came back to me at 4 o'clock. He said that the doctor didn't think it was good for me to remain here to gain weight because the stomach doesn't improve at all. He showed him facts and said that the operation wouldn't be difficult.

"After I leave here to go to the hospital, I want you to be here. Come as fast as you can. This way I will see if you are also happy, and then take me away from here. We will go for the operation. Don't be scared! I can't continue to live any longer this way with the stomach ache day and night. If you come, have a good attitude."

The following two paragraphs are a puzzle. We've no idea who the below mentioned Carlos or Carlo is. The line "See if you want to leave Battista or not in the house because Carlo has school" almost seems to suggest that Luigi is referencing Leno as Carlo. Be that as it may, currently we're at a loss to explain it.

"Take away from Carlos all the papers of value in the trunk in case of fire or loss.

"Because I believe you want to stay for a week to see how the operation will go. You can do whatever you want when I will be

out of danger. See what is better for you. See if you want to leave Battista or not in the house because Carlo has school, etc.

"Do as you think best."

The letter continues, "I repeat again, don't be afraid of this letter of mine. I wrote to you the real truth of how things are. I still have to believe it myself.

"I am happy of what Legrezza (assumed to be same Legrezza mentioned in Caterina's March 6th letter, though spelled somewhat differently) wrote to you, not everybody hates me. There are also others that love me. I have that as soon as we find ourselves feeling better we should go to Legrezza.

"At present I don't feel bad except of the stomach ache. Now I weigh 135½, but the doctor said that the four pound gain is not enough. The stomach doesn't improve.

"Come as soon as you can. The sooner you take me away from this place the better; to have to eat like a pig and always watched.

"Ferdinando won't take me away unless you are here.

"I think that Ferdinando will write to you. I send you kisses together with the children.

"I hope to see you soon.

"Remember to bring the bank book to take out money. Take out three hundred. You will keep it on you. It makes it easier for you when you are here. You will be busy here.

"I repeat again to have courage and don't cry because I have cried for a month and it didn't do any good.

"Again, I leave you with a big hug together with the children.

"Always your Luigi."

This concludes the translations of the six Prestini letters. However, it doesn't exhaust the small trove of Prestini family postcards and such donated to the society by John and Pat Colliver. Translating all those will doubtless take some time yet.

———— end ————

Olaf L. Olsen Businessman & Politician

by

Peter Coffin

Olaf L. Olsen was possibly one of the most successful businessmen and politicians Deer Park ever produced. He was born in Norway on February 1, 1880 as the first child of Louis Olsen and Hannah Dahl. The family moved to the United States in 1886 first settling near Fargo, North Dakota. Two years later the Olsen family moved to Spokane where his father was employed in a sawmill⁽¹⁾. In 1888 Louis Olsen, Sr. filed a homestead claim on the SE/4 of Section 32-Township 29 North-Range 42 East about 2 miles west of the future site of the town Deer Park and moved his large family there. Olaf grew up on the farm helping cut cord wood for sale to Spokane customers.

Olaf received his education in the public schools of Deer Park and Spokane where he completed a business course. He began his working life as telegrapher for the Great Northern Railroad (*the Spokane Falls and Northern*) in 1898 at the age of eighteen. He served as both a telegrapher and station agent for the railroad and worked there until 1903 (possibly 1906 as two of the biographical sketches have different dates).

He married Libbie M. Neaville, the daughter of John & Myra Neaville of Spokane on August 13, 1903. They became parents of three sons, Howard M. (born in 1904), J. Louis (born in 1906), and Walter N. (born in 1916). His social life was full as a thirty second degree Mason and a Shriner in the El Katif Temple.



Olaf Louis Olsen.
Photo circa 1910 — 1920.
This image was used in a number of Deer Park Union articles about Mr. Olsen.

In 1903 he organized the Olsen Mercantile Company of Deer Park with a store built on the southeast corner of Main Avenue

— Notes —

⁽¹⁾ *History of the State of Washington, Lancaster Pollard & Lloyd Spencer, 1937.*



Photo by Peter Coffin.

**The house at 728 East Crawford, Deer Park.
The Olsen family indicates that Olaf Olsen built this house while other references⁽³⁾ indicate that it was built by Louis Olsen, Sr.**

and Crawford Street. By 1909 he had sold this business to his father, Louis Olsen, Sr. and moved to Spokane to become secretary and treasurer for the Arcadia Orchard Company. He joined E. N. Robinson, Floyd Daggett, Allen Hayes, and H. J. McIntyre on the board of trustees and directors of the orchard company. By 1910 Daggett, Hayes and McIntyre had been removed as directors and Robinson and Olsen operated the company⁽²⁾. In addition to his duties as Secretary of the Arcadia Orchard Company he formed and operated an independent land development

business in northern Spokane County.

When the Arcadia Orchard Company moved to Deer Park from Spokane in early 1913 he purchased a large bungalow style house on east Crawford Street and moved his family into it. At this time he and E. N. Robinson purchased his father's interest in Deer Park's Olsen Mercantile Company.

In 1912 William Markwich, part owner of the Hotel Olsen sold his interests in it to O. L. Olsen and E. N. Robinson⁽⁴⁾. In a transaction dated January 13, 1913, the Olsen-Robinson Company store, along with the Ar-

— Notes —

- (2) Page 13 of Fahey's "Selling the Watered West."
- (3) Historic Resources Inventory, Deer Park, WA., 13th entry.
- (4) Deer Park Union, April 19, 1912.
- (5) Deer Park Union, January 24, 1913.

cadia Inn restaurant were sold to the Arcadia Orchards Company⁽⁵⁾. The Olsen-Robinson store was renamed the Arcadia Store

By late 1913 Olaf Olsen was one of the leading businessmen in Deer Park. He continued to be secretary-treasurer of the Arcadia Orchard Company as their finances required several reorganizations. Obligations on bonds due the Netherland-American Mortgage Company had not been paid. And the Arcadia Store that the Arcadia Orchards Company had purchased from Olsen and Robinson went out of business in early 1915⁶. Along with all this business involvement, he also was the owner of the Arcadia Chicken Ranch that produced eggs and meat for the Spokane market. During the late teens Olsen became president of the Arcadia Fruit Growers Association, a group promoting the apple industry and Arcadia Orchard apples. In addition he was elected a director of the First State Bank of Deer Park and chairman of the Spokane County Draft Board during the First World War.

In the latter half of the 1910-'20 decade, increasing maintenance costs due to hard winters and World War I shipping problems led the Netherlands-American Mortgage Company to take tighter control of the Arcadia Orchards Company and the reformed Arcadia Corporation⁷. After 1919 the Mortgage Com-

pany took total control of the orchard operation and the officers of the company were essentially salesman⁸. This continued until the summer of 1925 when the corporation ceased to do business.

By 1914 Olsen became increasingly interested in politics and in the fall of that year he was elected mayor of Deer Park⁹. Two years later he was elected Washington State Representative for the Fourth Legislative district¹⁰, and was re-elected from 1919 to 1925. In 1925 he was appointed by Washington State Governor Hartley to be the State Director of Business Control¹¹ and moved to western Washington. He resigned this position in 1941 and was then was appointed Superintendent of State Reformatory at Monroe, Washington in which capacity he served until 1945. After this appointment he continued to be associated with other businesses such as the Pacific Paper Board Company of Longview, Washington. He spent several years in California where he lived until 1956 when he moved back to western Washington and Seattle.

Olaf Olsen died in Seattle on February 6, 1958.

— end —

— Notes —

- (6) Deer Park Union, April 9, 1915.
- (7) Page 45 of Fahey's "Selling the Watered West".
- (8) Page 46, of Fahey's "Selling the Watered West".
- (9) Deer Park Union, December 11, 1914.
- (10) Deer Park Union, November 3, 1916.
- (11) Page 36 of "Olaf L. Olsen" in Pollard, 1937.

— References —

- Durham, N. W., 1912, History of the City of Spokane and Spokane Country Washington, From its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time: Spokane, S.J. Clarke Company, v. 3, 755 p.
- Fahey, John, ????, Selling the Watered West: Draft, Spokane Downtown Library, 57 p.
- Pollard, Lancaster, 1937, A History of the State of Washington: New York, The American Historical Society, v. 3, 408 p.

Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats

— or —

Bits of Chatter, Trivia, & Notices — all strung together.

... the *Mortarboard's* 100th issue ...

Each month since May, 2008, a volunteer editor has pasted together and then printed, stapled, and folded numerous hardcopies of one of these little magazines — these *Mortarboards*. And, as originally intended, every one of these prior editions remain available online, as well as in paperback format as part of our never-out-of-print *Collected Newsletters*. But if you think about it, it's rather remarkable that a proposal was put forward, an experimental format designed around that proposal, and a publishing project undertaken on the basis of that proposition that is still — almost a decade later — working much as originally intended.

... 76 years to Mars ...

In September, 1951, your current editor began the first grade at Clayton. At that point, the not quite as old as now school housed the 1st through 8th grades — its unaccredited high school having been discontinued just before the beginning of the 1939 school year.

In 1955 — just a few days after the beginning of your editor's fifth school year — Consolidated School District #414 stated its intention to rearrange things — to send all of Clayton's 7th and 8th graders to Deer Park, and then bus a selection of Deer Park's 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th graders to Clayton. Reportedly the reason for doing so was to eliminate Clayton's longstanding practice of doubling up the classes — 1st and 2nd grades together, 3rd and 4th together, and so on as deemed practical.

That two-classes-per-room thing had

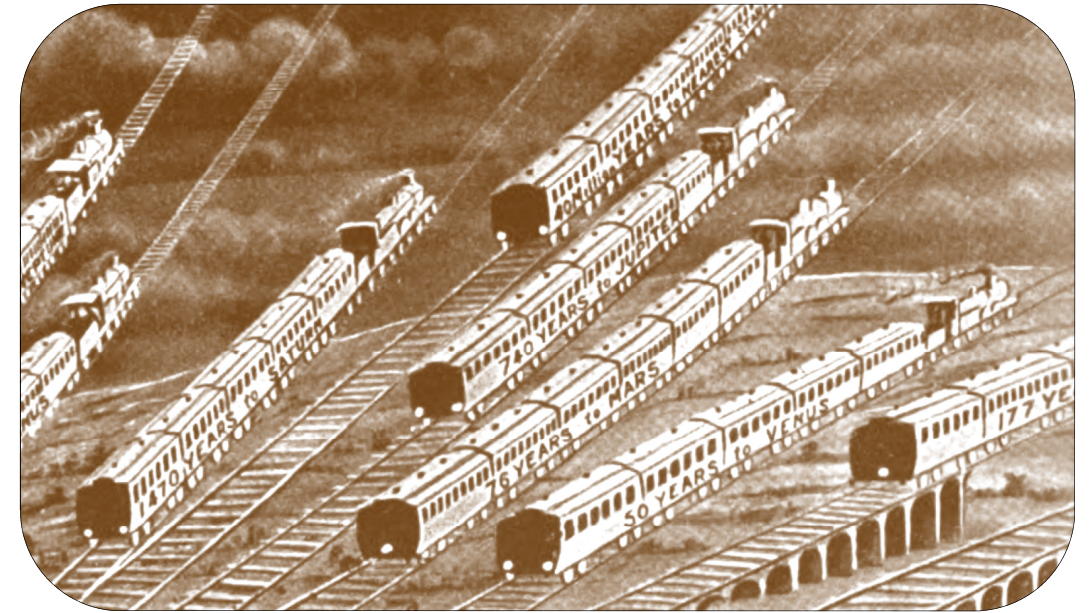
never seemed much of a problem to the kids attending Clayton. We still somehow learned to handwrite in cursive, march in silent double-file, and tell time by noting the position of the hands on the clock (*just like kids nowadays*).

But for those of us who thought of Clayton as our neighborhood school — and therefore had long expected to go there through the 8th grade — this didn't settle well.

As for Deer Park, the schoolboard requested that parents willing to have their kids bussed to Clayton step forward. Since — according to Deer Park's *Tri-County Tribune* — that call for public sacrifice didn't work out so well, that first year eleven 3rd graders, twelve 4th graders, twenty-one 5th graders, and seventeen 6th graders were drafted by lottery, packed into one or more buses every curriculum morning, and shipped north.

This yearly reshuffling apparently continued until the Clayton school was shuttered in the summer of 1973. As to what degree the resentment abated over time, we'd have to ask the community in general.

Note that I said "*this ... apparently continued.*" Even though I was there for the first two years of this primary resorting, what I recall most vividly is just a strong distaste for the way our lives had been upset. To get the story as then seen (*and detailed above*), I had to shuffle through the back issues of the local paper — the *Tribune*. Which is to say, I recalled some of the story, but not all — in part because I was still very young and not really paying attention to the why of it all, and in part because that was sixty some years ago. And even though the local paper was somewhat notorious for getting its facts twisted (*and being an editor and publisher now my-*



A portion of an illustration from
“The Book of Knowledge: The Children’s Encyclopedia,” 1910 edition.

self, I only have sympathy for how easily that can happen), it was remarkably better than my well-worn memory at getting things right.

This is to say, the funny thing about our memories — especially the vintage kind your editor deals with most every day — is that they're a lot less reliable than most people think.

The truth is, humans prefer that the recollections they recreate inside their heads be complete. Due to that preference, if we only have part of a recollection, we're more than capable of filling in the rest of the picture from the deep well of our imagination. In fact, we're psychologically compelled to do so. The problem begins when we forget which parts of our reconstructed memories are real, and which are fictions invented to fill in the blanks. Or better yet, fragments of other memories borrowed because they fit so comfortably inside our current model of the truth.

As noted, there's a scientific underpinning for this phenomena. Filtering through

all the jargon, what it seems to suggest is that our memories should be approached with a reasonable expectation of unreliability — especially as regards the specific details.

If the story we're recalling is something personal, there's seldom a problem in our memory's tendency to factually drift. It's likely close enough. Which means we're usually safe in applying that enduring journalistic adage to the tales we relate — never let the facts get in the way of a good story.

However, if facts and figures are central to the story, then our tendency toward creatively filling in the blanks can come back to haunt all those involved — especially any writer forgetting to add an occasional “*it seems as if,*” or “*as this writer recalls,*” or some other suitable qualifier to the script.

If something more than the above noted “*suitable qualifier*” is needed to cover everyone's hind-side, then your editor has to take on the role of “*fact-checker*” — another incredibly time consuming job small publica-

tions like ours have to somehow manage with nothing more than the resources at hand.

And all this draws us around to one of your editor's recollections of his time at the old Clayton school — a memory that involves a drawing of a locomotive on its way to Mars.

Note the qualifiers in the following.

I can't recall exactly when this incident occurred. If it was 5th or 6th grade, I would have been a student in one of Clayton's upstairs classrooms. If it had been earlier, I would have still been residing downstairs — though my recollection definitely places the location of this particular incident upstairs.

It wasn't common for 1st through 4th grade students to go upstairs at that time. Unless we were headed to the office or library, there wasn't really any reason. And if you couldn't cite a reason for being there, the kids on the upper floor tended to be a bit territorial.

As for why such territorialism, there is indeed a rational scientific basis. But the science behind the notion wouldn't enter the general consciousness until a decade later — with the publication of Konrad Lorenz's "*On Aggression*," and Robert Ardrey's "*The Territorial Imperative*." These gentlemen would suggest that the trepidation the 4th and below graders felt when ascending the stairs, especially if such was done without adequate excuse, was real. If the lower floor dwellers were captured, at best the upper floor's defenders would tell one of the teachers. At worse some mild violence would be involved.

That aside, the recollection I have in mind is of an illustration seen in a set of encyclopedia sitting on a table pushed against a wall in one of the upper-floor classrooms. I'm thinking the west wall of the southeast classroom — that being the 6th grade classroom during the 1955-'56 and 1956-'57 school years. The thing to remember here is that memory is malleable. So who really knows?

Though I didn't particularly like to read at the time, I was reasonably capable at it, so I understood the book's explanation of the above alluded to illustration.

As I remember, spread across facing

pages of one volume of the encyclopedia was an ingenious illustration attempting to suggest the size of the solar system with drawings of locomotives and trailing Pullman's speeding away from planet Earth; speeding away along railroad tracks to the sun, to the moon, and to the other planets. And along with each image was a label stating how long it would take each train, traveling sixty miles an hour, to reach the indicated celestial body.

I've always wanted to see that illustration again, just to confirm my memory. But I couldn't recall the name of the encyclopedia.

Whenever I was on my computer and this puzzle came to mind, I'd type something like "*encyclopedia, train to Mars*," or a variation thereof, into Google's search engine. And eventually that tactic returned a meaningful thread. Following that thread led to volume one of the Grolier Society's "*Book of Knowledge: The Children's Encyclopedia*" — the 1910 edition.

I'm not sure the illustration posted on the reverse of this page is exactly what I saw, since the 1910 version of the encyclopedia appears to have gone through several major revisions before I started school. But the degree of simplicity used in that early edition to demonstrate the solar system's immensity — 166 day to the moon, 76 years to Mars, 177 years to the sun, 5,055 years to Neptune, 40 million years to the nearest star — well, that ingenious bit of clarity was exactly as I recall.

And in essence that's what publishing and its attendant use of explanatory illustrations is all about — taking a complex concept and making it accessible to the reading public.

Part of the editor's job in this process is to evaluate and then make suggestions and/or changes that are likely to help the proffered publication do exactly that. And if the publication does that well, as "*The Book of Knowledge*" clearly did, some trace of the idea being explored — even if it involves a locomotive to Mars — might still be in the reader's memory a lifetime later.

———— *Wally Lee Parker* ————

Minutes of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society ———— July 9, 2016 ————

In attendance: Bill Sebright, Pat Parker, Wally Parker, Marilyn Reilly, Ella Jenkins, Pete Coffin, Lorraine Nord, Judy Coffin, Marie Morrill, Sue Rehms, Don Ball, Betty Deuber, Betty Burdette and Mark Wagner.

Society President Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. He reported that: 1) We received a thank you card from The Inland Northwest Camaro Club thanking us for a trophy sponsorship in the name of Peter Coffin. 2) He received a phone call and visit from Dennis Nicholas. Dennis is the grandson of Thornton and Dorothy Steele. They lived near the corner of Whittier and Cowan Roads. Dennis's mother was Nila Steele, next to the oldest of the Steele children. He will be sending more pictures and census information. 3) Pat and Wally Parker and I met with Susan Peterson in the building she bought from the Grove family at N 51 Main Street. It was the home of the Keyes drug store and the Western Auto hardware store owned by the Adamsons.

Society Treasurer Mark Wagner reported: Checks were written to Discount Sign Warehouse for \$472.15 for Brickyard Day T-shirts and one to Griffin Publishing for \$273.52. There were deposits of \$810.00. A transfer of \$500.00 was made to the web hosting account. The web hosting account had a withdrawal of \$26.95 for web hosting and a service fee of \$5.00 and ended the month at \$876.24.

Society Vice President Pete Coffin reported: 1) Ken Westby and I have finished with our Mortarboard paper on the Electric Service Station, now Erick's Realty office. Editor Parker will be given a copy during the

July meeting. 2) Mike Reiter read a review copy of "A Hole in the Bottom of Deer Lake" and asked if I had contacted the Deer Lake Home Owner's Association about the possibility of the story being an "urban myth" and gave me the name and phone number of Mike Phillips, a past chairman of the group. Mr. Phillips is an amateur historian and a source of much information about Deer Lake. He confirms that the story is not an urban myth. I sent him a copy of the paper for his comments.

Print editor Wally Parker reported: 1) A total of 150 copies of the July Mortarboard (#99) have been printed for distribution, and the online version has been submitted for posting. This issue features the first part of a two part article detailing the translation of the six Prestini letters donated to the society in 2011. This issue also features an article relating Mike Reiter's search for Deer Park's missing class of 1919 high school photo. The Letters/Brickbats segment notes a major donation of significant Deer Park business records; one of Ed Kingrey's recollections of Leno Prestini; details on how to manage a virtual visit to Luigi Prestini's home town of Besano, Italy; and a reflection on Eddie Olson's passing. 2) Fifteen copies of the Collected Newsletters, Volume Twenty-Seven, have been printed. This volume contains Mortarboard #97, #98, and #99. 3) Anyone wishing an inside track to envisioning, constructing, and proofing society publications is urged to join the society's "Editorial Group." Society membership is not a requirement. Contact the Editor of Print Publications for further information.

Webmaster Marie Morrill reported: The July *Mortarboard* is on the Website. The

format is getting easier to work with.

Penny Hutten reported that the West-erners do not meet in July and August, but have 2 tours planned. 1. On Thursday, July 21 Inland Empire Tours will be giving a tour called “Molly B’ Dam, Crystal Gold Mine, Kellogg staff Museum, Mining ghost Towns.” Price is \$84. 2. On Saturday, August 27 the tour will be guided by Ron Anglin, author of “Forgotten Trails, Historical Sources of the Columbia’s Big Bend Country.” Price is \$99. For information and reservations call (509) 747-1335.

As mentioned in Bill’s report above the Parkers and Bill met with Susan Peterson. We looked at the advertising curtain now “owned” by the Society. The curtain will stay where it is unless the building is no longer used as an art co-op or community center. Susan plans to remove all the lathe and plaster, so the curtain will need to be rolled up and stored during the remodeling. Cleaning and rolling up will have to be a careful process. Susan hopes to get the building on the Historic Registries. Pete Coffin has forwarded many newspaper articles to help in the process. Wally gave particulars about the construction of

the curtain and the cautions and care that needs to be exercised when handling and storing the curtain. Don Ball noted the unique construction of the roof of the Olson Building.

Wednesday, July 13 will be the 6th and last Brickyard Day Committee planning meeting, 6 PM, at the Real Estate Market-place. The flyer is done and being distributed. Don’t forget Brickyard Day is July 30 this year.

Betty Burdette said: 1) This year is her DPHS Class of 1946’s 70th reunion. Robert Olson and Doris Welch are also in her class. Call Betty at 276-6709 if you have questions. 2) The Settlers Day meeting is a week from this Monday at the Ambulance Building at 4:30.

The Heritage Network meeting is Monday, July 19 at the Kettle Falls Museum.

Next meeting: Saturday, August 13, 2016, at 9 AM at the Clayton Drive-In.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 AM.

The Society meeting minutes submitted by Mark Wagner, acting Secretary.

— end —

Society Contacts

We encourage anyone with observations, concerns, corrections, or divergent opinions regarding the contents of these newsletters to write the society or contact one or more of the individuals listed below. Resultant conversations can remain confidential if so desired.

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— C/DPHS —

Summer Days on the Farm. Do you remember?

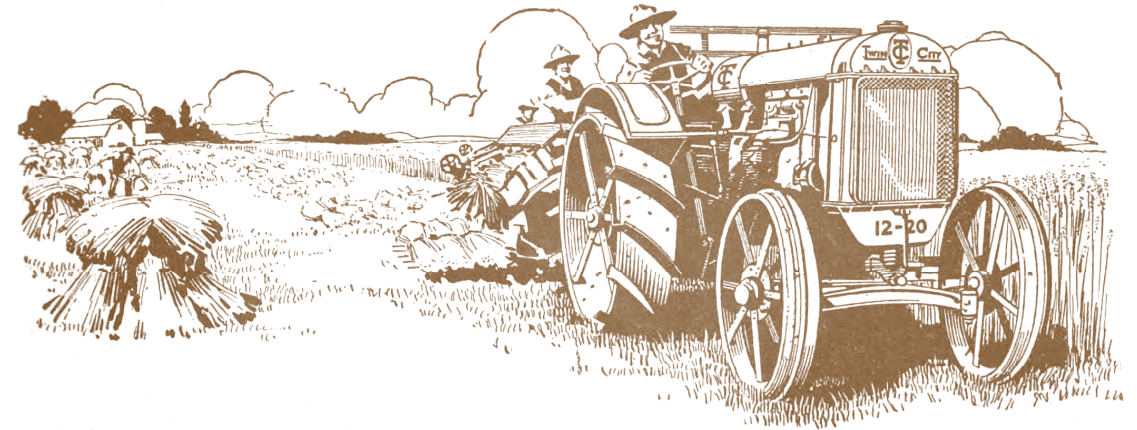


Illustration from the May 15, 1922, issue of Farm Machinery—Farm Power Magazine.

“The grain binder cuts the grain and ties it into bundles. Workmen gather these bundles into shocks in the field where they remain a short time to cure. When the grain is sufficiently dry, it (is) hauled directly from the shocks to the thresher.” — G. A. Collier, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture.

“I can remember walking the (wheat) field and stacking (the shocks). When the stationery threshing machine came around to our farm, we threw the bundles onto a wagon with pitch forks and hauled them to the thresher.” — Ed Kingrey

“A wagonload of shocks gathered from the field would be pulled up next to the threshing machine and tossed into the hopper one by one.” — Chuck Stewart

“The wheat was funneled down a spout into gunny sacks that were then hand sewed closed and stacked for hauling away to market or to storage. There would be a huge pile of straw as a result of this operation. It was often used as bedding for livestock, and could be a secondary source of income for the farmer. It took a considerable crew to man this operation.” — Wey Simpson

*The difference between a memory recalled
and archived history
is the degree of permanence.*

**Join the
Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society**

Box 293, Clayton, WA 99110
(509) 276-2693

(Yearly dues: Twenty dollars per household.)

Volunteer proofreaders for this issue: Betty Deuber, Wey Simpson, Chuck Stewart, Lina Swain, and Ken Westby.