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THE
CLAYTON/DEER PARK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Mortarboard

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Another Leno Prestini Painting Comes Home
Society Purchases Painting From Eugene, Oregon, Bookstore Owner
— by Wally Lee Parker —

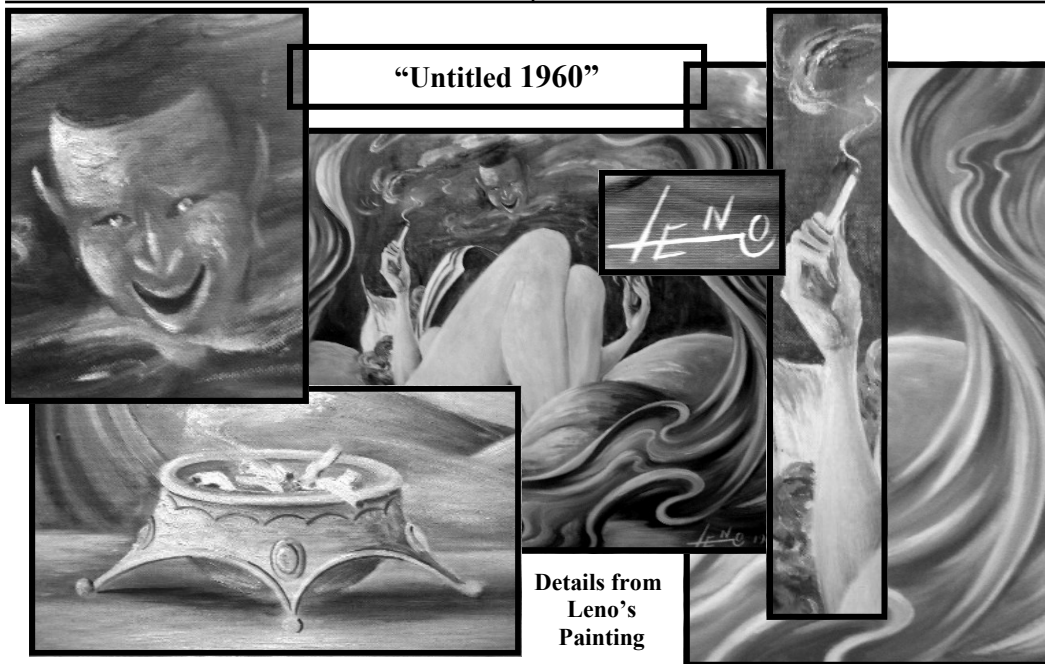
Last year three of The Heritage Network's member organizations formed a group called the Prestini Project. This team is tasked with the multi-year goal of creating a definitive history of Clayton artist Leno Prestini, and cataloging his works. The three member organizations are the Stevens County Historical Society, the Loon Lake Historical Society, and the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society.

As part of the project, Colville media specialist Grady Knight put together a special Leno

Prestini website. Via the website, on May 13th of this year a bookstore owner in Eugene, Oregon, sent Grady the following email.

Dean Smith wrote, *"I recently purchased a 22 by 28 inch painting by Leno Prestini and thought you might be interested in an image for your project. It was purchased at a local antique shop, and I don't have any more information as to where it came from or who owned it previously. Please feel free to contact me with any questions."*

Free — Take One



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Attached to the email were two photos — one showing the entire painting, and one a close-up of Leno's signature, followed, as was Leno's custom, with the year of the painting's completion — in this case, 1960.

From the photos alone it was evident that this was an original Leno. Color palette, application, imagery all said "Leno". But no one in the Prestini group could identify the painting itself. It was new to us.

The painting is another of Leno's nude studies. This shows the subject reclining on a bed. The image is framed with curtains as if we are viewing a theatrical scene — an illusion Leno solidified by brushing a leering comedy/tragedy mask into the darkness above the headboard. Other symbols include an upside down crown being used as an ashtray — something seen before. And though this particular painting has yet to be identified, the symbolic components placed in it, like the ashtray, seem familiar from Leno's other works.

In the several days after seeing Smith's email a lot of speculation surfaced. It appeared that Mister Smith had no idea who Leno Prestini was until he found the Prestini website. That discovery was probably due to a deliberate search on his part. This likely indicated Smith was trying to find out just what, exactly, he either had or was considering purchasing. Or this might indicate that his impulse to purchase the painting was based solely on the qualities seen in the painting, and/or a fairly low asking price.

I called Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society president Bill Sebright. *"If he didn't pay too much — and who would when they have no inkling as to the artist — then he might be willing to sell for a profit. He did say we should 'feel free to contact' him with any questions.' I wonder whether asking him if he'd consider tendering an offer within the category of 'any questions'."*

Bill agreed to the idea of making an offer. I phoned the other society board members, and though there were some initial reservations regarding the fact that the painting was a somewhat revealing nude, everyone agreed that as an original Leno, the nature of the image could be overlooked.

On May 17th I sent this email to Oregon.

"On behalf of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society, I am writing in response to your recent email informing the Prestini Project of your acquisition of a Prestini painting. Our historical society is working on this project in collaboration with several other organizations. Our combined intent is to produce a definitive history of Leno Prestini and his works. No doubt you have read an overview of the Prestini Project on one of the project's websites. This letter should not be considered as coming from the Prestini Project itself, but rather as an independent inquiry from the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society alone."

"For his entire life, Clayton was Leno's home town. He was someone most of the older lifelong residents of our area were at least acquainted with, and both Leno and his works continue to be of interest to our community. To my knowledge, no one in the community has

Just be honest in your offer. If you've done the best you can and it doesn't work out, it wasn't meant to be.

yet claimed to have any information, either recorded or by recollection, pertaining to the history of your painting - but the painting is obviously Leno's work. In that regard, the Board of Directors of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society has suggested I inquire as to whether you might entertain an offer for the painting."

On May 26th we received our first communication from Dean. *"I need to clarify two things about the Prestini painting you are considering. First, the painting is on canvas board, not canvas. Second, one of the small nails holding it in the original frame came through the board on the bottom edge, but it cannot be seen under the frame."*

I returned, *"We know of other instances where Leno used commercially available canvas board as opposed to actual artist canvas — stretched and prepped — so there's no particular problem with that. As for the damage to the edge of the board, since it's not in an area normally visible, that would not be a problem."*

"I'm assuming by the fact of your reply that you would consider selling the painting. Do you have a price in mind?"

Within a few hours Smith replied, *"I previously said I would entertain an offer. I definitely wouldn't sell at one level, might at another, and probably would at one more. There's something enchanting about this painting. I don't use*

Special thanks to Florene Moore, Sue Newell, Paul J. Erickson, Charles Stewart, and Bill Sebright for editorial assistance.

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the word enchanting often but I can't think of a better word. Not sure if it's the subject, composition, style, or painter. don't know."

"I know you're in a strange position. Just be honest in your offer. If you've done the best you can and it doesn't work out, it wasn't meant to be."

Late that evening I sent our offer to Mister Smith. I added, *"We would pick the painting up in Eugene, and pay in cash at that time."*

While waiting for a reply, I wrote the following to Bill.

"I have a feeling that we aren't going to like what we hear in reply — if we hear anything at all. After careful consideration, and from what little I know of the historic values placed on Leno's paintings, I wouldn't feel comfortable going above our original three digit offer. As far as I know — and this is just by vague recollections — I suspect that our offer is at least \$100.00 over the most ever paid for one of Leno's paintings."

"I think we should drop the negotiations rather than raising our offer — although that would mean that this isn't really a negotiation. I don't feel we could justify spending more on something we would have a problem showing due to the nature of its image."

"While the provocative image is problematic to the value, the date on the painting suggests that the subject matter may have implications regarding events occurring in Leno's personal life at about that time. As such there is likely an historic tie-in — though it is doubtful we'll ever have collateral evidence to prove that tie-in. My problem, as I would state to the gentleman if the issue came up, is that I would have difficulty going before the body of a society representing a historically agricultural and parochial community and arguing for spending more money on a painting of a nude with suggestive Freudian overtones. One of his more intricate landscapes or western themed paintings would be a different matter."

"My feeling at the moment is that this gentleman will not be inclined to take our offer. But we'll see."

On the morning of the 27th, his reply.

"Contemporary painters with little artistic depth or talent start in that range. The offer is disappointing. Understanding the lore of Prestini

and seeing his work in person, I believe his works should be valued between \$1500 low and \$4500 high — or more — and believe this one falls in the higher range. The subject matter and composition is unique and enchanting. I would have considered \$2000, with a consolation it would end up locally where it would be enjoyed and appreciated."

I responded that afternoon by saying; *"I regret that you find the historical society's offer disappointing. However, on behalf of the society, I do want to thank you for allowing us the privilege of having made the offer."*

From searching the internet for information about an unknown artist, to seeing "artistic depth" and a "unique and enchanting" quality in Leno's painting in the span of two weeks suggested that Mister Smith was still negotiating. That thought was reinforced that afternoon when I received this in response to my last email.

"I'll be in the Spokane area later this fall and, if there is time, I would like to drop by and see the Prestini collection. Is it in Clayton?"

I thought it a good opportunity to explain our position, and to make it clear that we had no more offers to make.

"Sixty Prestini canvases are owned by the Stevens County Historical Society in Colville. At any given time approximately 10 of those are on display. Two Prestini paintings are owned by the Loon Lake Historical Society, and are on permanent display at their facility in Loon Lake. One Prestini painting is owned by the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society — it can be viewed by special arrangement."

"It is believed that Prestini created in the vicinity of one hundred and twenty paintings. Perhaps eighty of those are currently accounted for, but due to the fact that the artist referred to his paintings by name (when the artist gave them names) and not numbers, and due to the fact that the names are sometimes only vaguely recalled, it's difficult to know for sure. We hope to have much of this confusion settled after all available paintings are photographed and cataloged."

"It appears that the artist sold very few of his paintings. To date none of the institutions holding Prestini's works have paid for them. The

He did estimate the value based solely on the quality of the workmanship — and we all found that estimate “disappointing”.

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Colville holdings were donated in total by the family of Leno's brother, Battista. Loon Lake's two paintings were donated by local residents. The C/DPHS's painting was donated by a family member of the original owner."

"I believe the most recent Prestini painting to change hands within the local community — that was several years ago — traded for about three hundred dollars."

"When the Antique Roadshow visited Spokane last year, one of our members took our painting — another Prestini nude — to see if we could get an approximation of value for insurance purposes. After consulting the other appraisers, and his computer, the appraiser said he couldn't give us a probable value since there was no history in the art market database of Prestini paintings being bought or sold. He did estimate the value based solely on the quality of the workmanship — and we all found that estimate "disappointing". It might be worthwhile for you to take your Prestini to a professional art appraiser to assure yourself as to the realism of your estimated monetary value.

Our estimate is based solely on local historical interest, and therefore doesn't reflect any added speculative value what so ever."

"One of the goals of The Heritage Network, the Prestini Project, and the three historical societies directly involved, is to create a book cataloging all known data on Prestini's paintings. That book will contain high definition photographs of many of those paintings. It would seem a wise move on your part to have the Prestini Project's media specialist take a high definition, color corrected photograph of your painting for possible inclusion in the "Project's" book. Since you are coming to Spokane later this year, then would seem a convenient time for both you and the specialist. It is unlikely that the 'Project' will offer to pay you for the privilege of photographing your painting. However, since we are hoping our project will generate national interest in Leno's work, if your painting is selected to be featured in the 'Project's' book, it might help you obtain a price more to your liking."

That afternoon Dean replied, "Thanks for the information". With that, I considered the issue

closed.

A few days later I sent an essay of my thoughts to the local society members and associates. Portions of that essay are included below.

"So what is this or any other of Leno's paintings worth — with "priceless" not being an acceptable answer? Oddly enough the answer in dollars is zero. And that holds true for anything when considered solely as a work of art."

"Most any art expert will tell people not to invest in art. When you're considering buying something — lets say a painting — the first thing you want to think about is how much you like the painting, and how long you can live in the same house with it. The logic here is that if you buy with the intent of selling for profit at some future date, statistically you should expect to be living with that particular painting for the rest of your life. That advice is a fairly typical indicator of your chance to profit from an investment in art."

"The intrinsic value of a work of art is zero. If it's a bronze, it might have some value for

its metal content. If it's a painting, it might generate a cent or two as recycled linen (doubtful), or have some value as tinder to start a fire. Its value as art is an intangible, and is solely based on what someone is willing to pay. And the only realistic way of documenting said value is the cost of exchanging ownership. The willingness to pay a given amount is worth nothing before the amount is actually paid (creative accounting aside). This means the seller's asking price is no indicator of worth until the deal is done and money actually changes hands."

"On the painting in question, when appraised just on the qualities of the artwork itself, we find ourselves dealing with some interesting points — both specific and general. Dean Smith describes the painting in question as charming. I would think 'disturbing' would be a better word — though this choice in no way diminishes the painting's artistic value. What I see in this painting is a rather heavy-handed editorial regarding a likely non-fictional situation or person. As to who or what specifically is being referenced, we'll need evidence from some outside source to know for sure."

**Leno never cheated his audience like that
— and that is one of the reasons why his
artwork is still remembered and revered in
our part of the country.**

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"Apparently many of Leno's paintings were editorials. The words Leno used when editorializing were probably the same kinds of symbolic elements Father Louis Saint Marie (Mortarboard issue # 2) was describing when he used the term allegoric. Though the meanings of Leno's allegoric symbols may largely remain arguable without some kind of outside evidence as to Leno's actual intent, they seldom seemed to be particularly subtle in nature. And in that sense, they seemed to carry the essence of some rather blunt — though often obscure — editorial cartoons. They seem to carry the essence of something I should be able to "get" on the basis of a subconscious cultural language or theoretical racial memory — as explained in that section of Psychology 101 dealing with the historical roots of psychoanalysis."

"I see what is in this particular painting, but I don't get its meaning. I can't hear the words. The artsy answer is that this is just the kind of interpretive ambiguity Leno wanted to instill in the viewer. But my working-class guess is that Leno never cheated his audience like that — and that is one of the reasons why his artwork is still remembered and revered in our part of the country. The prime charm of his work is its accessibility — an accessibility generated by Leno's use of western themes and common objects clearly represented. When a painting moves beyond understanding — as this one has — it's possibly because we aren't the viewers Leno was trying to communicate with. My guess is that the message encoded within this particular image is a very personal missive intended for only one or two specific people. And that the person or persons intended as his audience could read this allegoric message with ease — since their shared lives and common experiences would act as the keys to the cipher."

"This is all conjecture — and hardly original conjecture at that."

"Researching Leno involves more than just collecting quotes from people who knew him — if anyone ever really did know him. Though collecting memories is important, it's only one step. Researching Leno must also involve opening a dialog within the larger arts community. Any insights captured during the ensuing exchanges of ideas, viewpoints, and opinions will hopefully allow us to see Leno's art with more educated eyes."

"I don't know how to open up this dialog."

I don't know if any members of the arts community would want to participate in such a dialog. But I think we need to find out."

With the above, the subject of Leno's reclining nude faded away. Then, on the 24th of June, this email arrived from Dean.

"If the offer still stands, I'm willing to sell you the painting. Let me know."

Bill Sebright was vacationing in Europe, so I couldn't discuss this change in circumstance with him. I phoned society board member Mark Wagner, who suggested I "go for it". And my wife, Pat, was of a similar opinion to Mark's. I had no idea what had changed on Dean's side, though my first thought was that Dean had, as suggested, taken the Prestini to a professional art appraiser. My second thought was that after almost a month of silence it had become clear that we had no second offer to make. So the next day I sent him this.

"Our original offer still stands. Our plan is to be in the general vicinity of Eugene by late Sunday evening. I'm thinking between 10 and 11 Monday morning would work well for the meeting. I'll need an address. With that I can locate you on my "Street and Trips" program, and print out the necessary maps. I have your cell phone number, just in case we have any problems on the road that might delay us. Does this sound okay?"

Dean replied, *"The painting is at the Smith Family Bookstore, 768 East 13th Avenue."*

If I were planning a trip, this would not have been the time of year I would have chosen. As far as I'm concerned, May and September are the best times for highway travel. The weather tends toward the cooler, the highway congestion is down, and most of the seasonal roadside attractions are open. But, as the wife pointed out, if we wanted the painting, the best time to move was now, before something changed — and before the worst of the 4th of July traffic hit the road.

The trip to Eugene and back would require at least sixteen hours on the highway. We decided to break up the trip and try not spending more than four hours in the car on any given day. We left Friday morning for my daughter's place in Gig Harbor. The next morning, the local television news noted that on Friday the U. S. Track Olympic Trials had started a ten day run in Eugene. One interview clip with a visitor to the event mentioned that the closest unbooked hotel room she could find was in Corvallis

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— forty five miles north of Eugene.

Hearing that, we were on the daughter's computer. We found a Quality Inn just off the I-5 freeway at Albany and booked a room for the next two nights.

That evening, while we were checking in at the Albany hotel, several people were turned away at the desk. The clerk said, "Between a local baseball tournament and the Olympic trials in Eugene, I've been saying 'no' to people since early morning."

Sunday morning we drove to Tillamook and toured an airplane museum housed inside a surviving World War II naval blimp hanger — a building advertised as the "*world's largest wood structure*". Most of the thirty some planes on exhibit were privately owned and in flying condition.

The next sweltering morning we left the Albany hotel for Eugene. The 13th Avenue Smith Family Bookstore nestles tightly up against the western edge of the park-like campus of the University of Oregon. Few streets penetrate into the green canopied campus from the west side — giving the university a vaguely defined but most definite psychological separation from the city.

Most of the local streets are tree lined, narrow, and one-way. Almost every niche not packed with tree or lawn, building or sidewalk, roadway or bike path, seems occupied by a parked car. Crosswalks are unimportant since no one seemed to be using them, and the average speed of motor vehicles in the immediate area of the bookstore — probably less than five miles an hour. And even that's not slow enough for students who apparently hadn't yet been forced to endure that critical physics class during which the tenured explain to the invincible the consequences of three thousand pounds of metal thumping over the top of one hundred and twenty pounds of squealing protoplasm. Or that even one Birkenstocked foot passing under a wheel can mean numerous surgeries and a lifetime of recurring pain.

And I'm sure if one sat quietly, with watch in hand, one could estimate the timing of university classes by the surge and ebb of students in the streets.

One flight up in an older building, the bookstore is most certainly not your local Barnes and Nobles. This is a working bookstore. No slick displays or impulse buying racks. Just tall rows of

bookshelves with narrow isles between — and lots of them. A couple of cluttered desks to the front. And that was just about all.

My impression was that this was an off-campus store primarily trading in materials needed by the university's students. Exactly what those materials might have been was a mystery. I would have liked to have explored further, but our parking situation in the street below was less than legal.

I asked one of the young ladies in attendance, "Is Dean Smith here?"

"I think he's in back. Follow me, please." The store seemed to spread out in all directions.

"Dean! Where are you?"

"Over here," came the reply.

"Where's here?"

A few rows later, Dean came walking out. Quick introductions and a "Come on back."

His office space had several low counters acting as partitions. On the wall behind hung Leno's nude.

The photographs didn't do it justice — though it was certainly far from being one of Leno's best. Still, there was little doubt this was a Leno. I mentioned all this, and counted out the money.

Dean slid over a stepstool. "I'll get it down."

The young lady said, "I understand you intend to write a book about this artist."

"The group I'm working with intends to have a book and DVD done. We're going to try to get him and his works a bit more recognition."

As Dean handed me a sales receipt for the painting, the girl said to him, "Maybe you should have kept the painting." With the emphasis on "should".

At that point it seemed clear that the owner had been debating — had been struggling with the idea that Leno's painting might bring a larger premium after the book and DVD had appeared. I believe that he eventually decided much as I had — that Leno was likely to remain of primary interest only to our local area. And that price pressures in such a small market would tend to remain much lower. While none of that was certain, he had an assured profit now, against a much larger hypothetical profit several years from now. Since it had become apparent that we had no inclination to offer more than our initial offer — and since it had

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become apparent that I wasn't even going to debate his estimate of \$4,500.00 as being the actual value of a work like this by an artist like Leno, he chose the much lesser but assured profit.

With the nude sheathed in plain brown

wrapping paper, I carried her down the street to our car, and gently laid her in the trunk. The deal was done. The reclining lady was coming home.

**In Search Of Clayton's
Spokane Pottery Company**

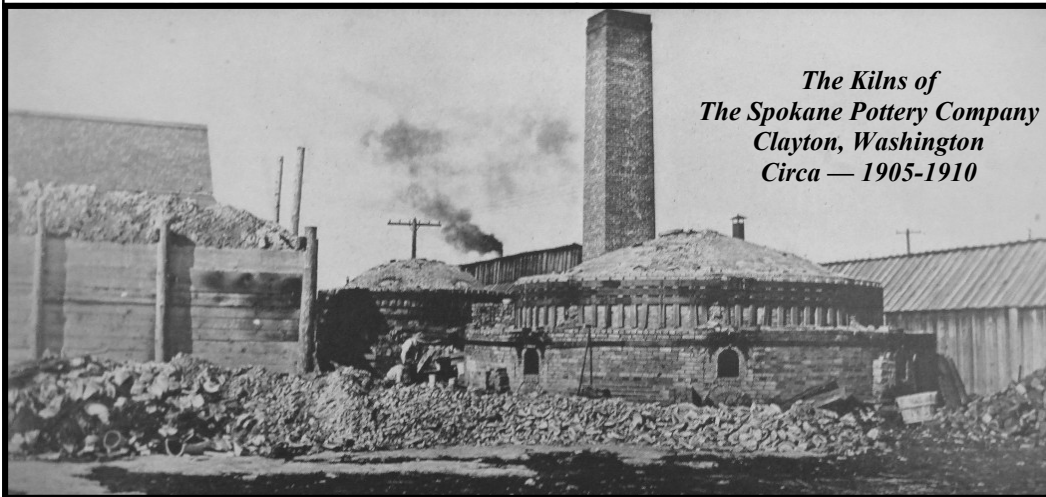
In 1910, Pullman's State College of Washington (now W. S. U.) published a book by Solon Shedd, professor of geology. The book, *The Clays of the State of Washington: Their Geology, Mineralogy, and Technology*, contained an entry about the Spokane Pottery Company, describing it as "located in Clayton." Shedd said the Clayton company had "the largest and most complete equipment of any stoneware plant in Washington." The production capability of the plant was calculated in "gallons" — assumably a reference to the fluid capacity of all the pots and jugs produced — and went on to estimate the yearly output at one million of these gallons.

The manufacturing process used was described as "jollyng" and "jiggering". Both these terms describe similar machine techniques for making stoneware. With jiggering, a mold of the interior of the pot is used. A clay slab is wrapped around the exterior of the mold, and a profile arm is pressed

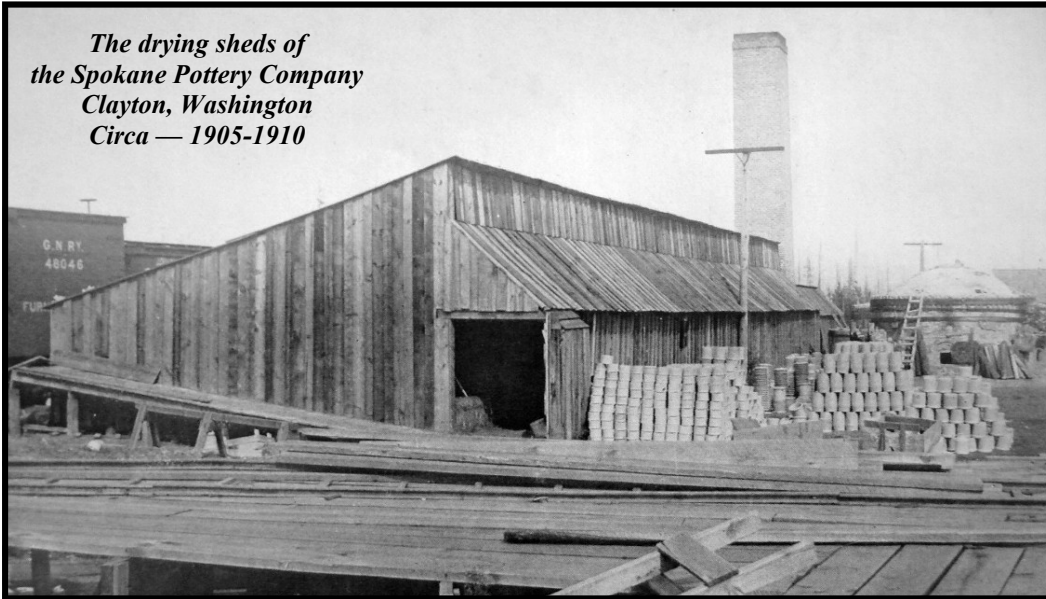
against the outside of the wrapped clay as the mold is spun. This profile arm pushes the clay tight against the internal mold while shaving away the excess surface clay. This shaving forms the exterior of the pot. Jollyng is this same process from the other side. The clay slab is pressed into the interior of a hollow mold and the profile arm shaves excess clay away from the interior of the pot. Simply said, with jiggering the mold determines the inside shape of the pot. With jollyng, the mold determines the outside shape of the pot. And with each, the lever arm profile determines the shape of the remaining surface.

This process sidesteps the traditional method of forming pots by throwing clay on a turntable and shaping the vessel by hand. Machines allow unskilled labor to turn out pots with assembly line speed and a uniformity of shape and thickness unlikely for all but the most experienced of tradi-

The downdraft kilns seen below likely share the single stack. What appears to be a post and plank storage bunker for raw clay stands to the left. And the left side of the rubble pile that stretches across the foreground clearly contains a number of large jug and crock shards.



*The drying sheds of
the Spokane Pottery Company
Clayton, Washington
Circa — 1905-1910*



tional potters.

The literature also stated that the factory was powered by a thirty horsepower steam engine and seventy horsepower boiler. Power from the steam engine would most likely have been distributed throughout the factory by an elevated power-shaft, with drums every so often over which belts would access the spinning shaft to drive machines on the floor below.

Boiler steam also supplied the heat used in two 20 by 40 foot drying rooms, as well as drying heat for the room where 'slips' were applied to the ware.

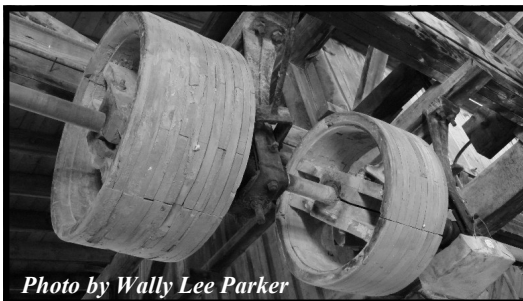


Photo by Wally Lee Parker

**Overhead power-shaft and power takeoff drums
as preserved at the Medalta pottery works,
Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada.**

The indicated 'slips' were glazes made of special clays mixed with water until a creamy consistency was obtained. These slips could then be sprayed onto the ware, or applied by dipping the ware into a vat of slip. This is a process called engobing — covering the stronger clay body with a waterproofing surface glaze that would also fire to a finish more pleasing to the eye. The exact method of application used at the Spokane Pottery Company is not specified in Shedd's book. The society's one example of this company's wares — a two gallon crock — shows an overall engobing, both interior and exterior. Perhaps a pottery expert could tell us whether this crock holds some hint of the method of slip application — dip or spray.

According to Shedd, both the large drying rooms, as well as the slip room, were inside the 80 by 100 foot factory building. Other machinery included wheels for turning hand formed jugs, crocks, and flowerpots, plus a machine for pressing flowerpots "from two to six inches in diameter." It's assumed the requisite clay crusher, dry clay shaker sieves, and pug mill for mixing were also included.

Someplace there would also have been a laying-aside cellar where mixed clay would be set to ferment for at least a few weeks before use — a common step used to cure pottery and terra clays, one known to be in use at Washington Brick and

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Photo Courtesy Mae (Huffman) Fischbach

The building and smokestack seen at the far (east) end of Clayton — and enlarged in the inset — is believed to be the Spokane Pottery Company factory. This photo was taken from a postcard that Clayton resident William C. Huffman sent to his brother, Charles Huffman of Morganton, North Carolina, in 1908. The note on the reverse asked Charles when he planned to move west. The card is from the Mae (Huffman) Fischbach collection.

Lime's new terra cotta works — that operation being just across the railroad tracks to the northwest.

Shedd reported that the factory fired its wares in three circular, downdraft kilns. Most glazed ware was fired in muffle kilns such as used in Washington Brick's terra cotta works. These kilns separated the wares from the combustion gases — from the flames — ensuring that ash, debris, and combustion contaminants in the kiln atmosphere didn't mar or chemically alter the glazed surfaces of the wares.

It appears that these three kilns utilized the same smokestack. With periodic kilns, this was common practice — though normally it was only two kilns per stack.

The factory's clay deposits were located "six miles north of the town, and is in Section 32, Township 30 North, Range 42 East", according to Solon Shedd. The clay was dug from open pits and hauled to the factory by wagon teams.

As throughout much of Clayton's clay beds, the higher quality pottery clays being dug were

layered toward the bottom of the pits, overburdened by common sandy yellow clays. The pottery clay tended toward white in color, with a "slick, greasy feel". Doubtless it would have passed the ultimate field test for purity — the taste test. A small amount of clay would have been ground between the teeth. Clay of high purity isn't detectably gritty when chewed.

In laboratory test this refractory clay fused — vitrified — at 1,710 degrees Centigrade (3,110 degrees Fahrenheit), making it refractory grade, and excellent for pottery and stoneware. And much of the literature contemporary to the times stated that Clayton's refractory grade clays were on a par with the best anywhere in the world.

To date we've found few traces of the company in the available archives, making for a very spotty history. The oldest record so far found suggests a possible though not proven link between the Spokane Pottery Company and an even earlier pottery company — the Standard Pottery Company of Clayton — and also to a man most early Clayton

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residents would have known well.

An article from the March 6th, 1901 *Spokesman-Review* states, “*A deal has just come off by which Dan Raymond, formerly of Spokane, takes full possession of the pottery works at Clayton, Wash., owned by the Standard Stoneware Company. The Clayton plant was operated until a year ago by J. H. Spear of the Washington Brick & Lime Company of this city, who sold it to Mr. Raymond and L. J. Hankim. Mr. Raymond is in Spokane, but will leave shortly to look after the property.*”

The article continues on to say that “*Raymond was in the Washington Brick & Lime Company’s employ*” until he enlisted in the military for active duty — presumably during the Spanish-American War. The Spokane paper states that Raymond, along with Hankim bought the company “*a year ago*”. The newspaper announcement indicated that Raymond was buying out Hankim’s share, and that Hankim was taking employment in the terra cotta department at Washington Brick & Lime.

No indication is given of any change of the company’s name from Standard Stoneware to Spokane Pottery as the result of the 1901 deal.

The *Spokesman-Review* stated that the prior operator of Standard Stoneware was J. H. Spear. Joseph Spear and Henry Brook founded Washington Brick & Lime in or about 1888 — as we currently believe. Though not specifically stated, there is an implication in the *Review* article that Spear also owned Standard Stoneware. At this point there’s no indication that Standard Stoneware was ever corporately linked to Washington Brick & Lime. And although we know construction of the Clayton brick plant began in 1893, we’ve no date for the founding of Standard Stoneware.

As for the link connecting Standard Stoneware to Spokane Pottery, nothing has so far surfaced. The final line in the *Spokesman-Review* article states that “*The Clayton pottery is the only one of its kind in the district. There are but two in the state.*” So we know that as of 1901 there was only one pottery in Clayton. No trace of Standard Stoneware after 1901 has yet surfaced.

We know that Spokane Pottery Company definitely existed as of 1905. At that point it was mentioned in Washington State Superior Court documents as a by-stander on the fringe of a court battle between Washington Brick & Lime and a certain foreign company over a draft payment by

Spokane Pottery to the foreign company while Washington Brick had a garnishment against the foreign company. Spokane Pottery was not a direct party to the action, since its obligation was to the foreign company, and that obligation had been fulfilled by the issuance of the questioned draft. The legal action was Washington Brick demanding payment of its garnishment from Spokane Pottery Company’s draft before the money moved on to its indicated foreign recipient. Washington Brick won the argument in court.

Solon Shedd’s book was published in 1910, so we know Spokane Pottery existed prior to that date. As for when it went out of business ...

The memoirs of Battista Prestini, Leno’s older brother, hinted at the demise of Spokane Pottery. About 1911 the Prestini family moved from Vermont to the Buckeye area south of Deer Park. Battista’s father got a job at the Clayton terra cotta factory, and moved the family into company housing in 1912 or 1913. From that point Battista recorded, “*Mother and father decided to buy an old house located in east Clayton near (an) old sawmill and pottery. Not much of a house. Mother was unhappy. We played ball in the sawdust, and broke millions of cups, dishes, and flowerpots.*”

The location sounds right for the Spokane Pottery Company, so our assumption is that the factory had shut down by about 1913.

The society hopes that more data will surface regarding this factory. We hope that a definite link can be established between the Standard Stoneware Company of Clayton and the Spokane Pottery Company of Clayton — and until we have evidence, our suspicion that the later is the corporate successor to the former will remain only that. We will also continue to look for the exact nature of the link between Washington Brick & Lime founder Joseph H. Spear and Standard Stoneware. And we hope that someday we’ll be able to draw a complete history of pottery manufacturing in Clayton — a history outlining the founding of the Standard Stoneware, and continuing on through the demise of the Spokane Pottery Company, thereby bringing this lost portion of Clayton’s history back into the light.

Letters To The Society

Please Note:
All comments, corrections, and criticisms printed can and will be edited by the society for clarity, brevity, and — if necessary — content.

With all the material about Leno Prestini flying over the internet of recent, Melinda (Ward) Reynolds sent this note to the society.

When I was about ten, Mom and Dad took me to Jack and Stell's for dinner, and Leno Prestini was there. I had always been fascinated by him, and I loved to paint, so Mom said, "Go talk to him." I was scared spit-less, but I finally got the nerve and approached him with my 'very important' question. I asked, "What is the most important thing an artist should know?" He replied, "A good artist knows when to quit!" That advice isn't as easy to follow as it may seem, but in my opinion it's profoundly true. He made quite an impact on me.

Joe Feist, principal of Deer Park High School, recently gave C/DPHS president Bill Sebright a bound folder titled "Deer Park High School Commencement Addresses". This booklet contained typewritten copies of all the school's Valedictorian and Salutatorian speeches from 1959 through 1969. Bill sent Ken Westby a copy of Ken's 1959 Valedictorian speech, and Ken returned this.

I think I know why those were kept. A lot of students were having problems with our principal, Lee Pangle, and Ted Clark managed to work that fact into his 1957 graduation speech — much to the audience's delight. I think something like that happened again in '58, because before my 1959 graduation, Mister Pangle called me into his office and told

me to provide him with a written copy of my intended speech. I guess he didn't know me very well. I had no intention of sneaking any comments about him into it.

I wrote and submitted this more-or-less-suck-up speech, and he was quite happy with it. In later years I wondered what might have happened had I substituted a Ted Clark type speech at the last minute — aside from the fact that my family would have disowned me.

As Paul Harvey would say, "And now you know the rest of the story."

Pete Coffin, DPHS 1960, submitted his own Lee Pangle story — although this one is also about one of our favorite teachers, Miss Alice Rice.

When I was a Junior in Miss Rice's Chemistry class — I think it was chemistry — the class extended into the time period just before lunch when band was to practice. Ralph Lauer and other band members were excused at the beginning of the band time, and the rest of us just sat around. Several of my classmates and I decided we would just get up and walk out with the band members, then go to lunch. When Miss Rice finally saw through our deception, she sent us all to the office.

We all filed into the office, filling it. Pangle asked why we were there. He raised his eyebrows and sighed when he heard Miss Rice had thrown the lot of us out.

He smoothed her ruffled feathers, then negotiated some type of paper we'd have to write as a way of getting back into class. I don't think our parents ever found out about any of this.

Society Minutes — July, 2008

The July 12th meeting was called to order by society president Bill Sebright at 09:00 AM. In attendance were Mark Wagner, Patricia Parker, Wally Lee Parker, Bob Clouse, Mary Clouse, Marilyn Reilly, Lorraine Nord, Warren Nord, Aaron Olson, Arlene Olson, and Betty Biddle.

Treasurer Mark Wagner reported the current status of the society's finances. Such was en-

tered into the records.

Wally Lee Parker, Editor of Print Publications, filled the group in regarding the society's negotiations for and purchase of a previously unknown Leno Prestini painting. Details regarding this purchase will appear in the next issue of the Mortarboard. It was reported that the amount paid was a mid-range three digit figure, and that any rumors of

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amounts above that are incorrect. The newly acquired painting was on display during the meeting.

Wally reported that issue #3 of the Mortarboard was in print, and also available on the society's website as a PDF download.

Although identified by notations attached to the society's copy of the original Lawrence Zimmerer photo, evidence was brought forward suggesting that the church shown on the cover of issue #3 was not Clayton's actual Trysil/Zion church. The editor stated that should this prove to be true, steps will be taken to replace the photo with a picture of the correct building in future prints of issue #3 — as well as in the website's PDF of issue #3. (This has been done.)

Our expectation is that soon after issue #4 of the Mortarboard goes into print in August, the society will print and bind issues 1 through 4 together as Volume #1 of the Collected Newsletters. We expect these booklets to be near replicas of the published newsletters, with a few additions such as a contents page. The society is expected to ask for a donation of \$3.00 for each copy of the Collected Newsletters — this money to cover the cost of printing, distribution of "free" promotional copies, purchase of research materials, and other assorted expenses related to the publication of the newsletters.

Webmaster Bob Clouse reported that 739 unique email addresses signed in on the society's website during the month of June. How many times each of these unique addresses may have returned, we have no idea, but believe the total volume of visits per month is well into the thousands.

Bob reports that Paul Erickson has brought forward some very constructive ideas as to how the society can increase public interest in the information booth it sets up at the Old Setters and Clayton Day celebrations.

As a public relations experiment, Bob has ordered the society 500 business cards to be passed out at various venues. These cards will contain contact numbers, email addresses, and so on.

This year's Clayton Day will be held on Saturday, August 2nd. Taffy Long of the "Clayton Burger" needs assistance with the Clayton Day breakfast. Anyone willing to help is asked to show up at the 'Clayton Drive In' between 6 and 7 AM. The society's treasurer, Mark Wagner, volunteered for this duty once again — saying he thought it was fun to wear the apron.

Wilma Calicoat is in charge of the celebration's lunch at the Old Clayton School. Anyone willing to sign on to help there is urged to contact Wilma.

Between 10 AM and 3 PM on Clayton Day, an art and history display will be set up in the multipurpose room on the grounds of Old Clayton School. The society will be participating in that.

In other business, Bill Sebright reports that Florene Moore is continuing her work on a list of the area's old schools. She is adding school district numbers, county locations, and so on.

Bill also noted that the Owens Museum was given credit for a photo in the last issue of the Deer Park Gazette. We are still trying to find out who is in charge of the archives of the Owen Museum today, and where those archives are currently located.

With the announcement that we are expecting the three Olsen brothers — Terry, Tom, and George — to attend the August meeting, July's meeting was adjourned at 09:40 AM.

Immediately after the meeting an unofficial discussion was held regarding the propriety of displaying either or both of the society's two Prestini canvases at the upcoming Clayton Day celebration — with special concern regarding the society's latest rather provocative acquisition. Although none of the membership expressed offence at the contents of Leno's previously unknown painting, it was decided that an uncontrolled and generally open venue such as the school's multipurpose room would not be the best place to introduce either of the society's two nudes to the public. We expect that something more in the nature of a traditional art gallery presentation will likely occur somewhere within this area in the near future, and we fully expect to take advantage of any such showing to allow the public a chance to view both of our ladies in a proper setting.

Society meetings are scheduled for every second Saturday of the month at the Clayton Drive In — unless that date conflicts with a holiday. The official proceedings begin at 09:00 AM, and seldom last more than an hour. The meetings are reasonably informal, and drop-ins are always welcome.

Over The Kitchen Table

The Editor's Ruminations: Visiting Museums In British Columbia, Alberta, and Montana
— by Wally Lee Parker —

This last May, the wife and I took a few days to drive through British Columbia, Alberta, Montana, and Idaho. The wife is a Canadian national, born in British Columbia, with a daughter living near Lethbridge, Alberta, so we often trek north of the border to visit family and friends.

On this trip we toured the Canadian Museum of Rail Travel in Cranbrook, British Columbia. This is a large facility of national stature, containing impeccably restored examples of passenger railcars from the most affluent age of rail travel.

As part of a guided tour, we walked through a number of Pullman and Pullman style cars in various states of restoration. For someone like me — someone who has never seen the inside of a classic Pullman other than while watching BBC murder mysteries on the telly — just seeing the mechanics of converting day coaches into sleepers was worthwhile. You can add to that the fact that touring some of these very expensive examples of rolling stock is essentially like walking through the inside of a finely detailed piece of Victorian furniture. Once you've had the opportunity to amble through a fully restored circa 1900 rail coach with its intricate patterns of gold-leaf inlays pressed into panels of dark, burlled-walnut veneers; once you've noticed how light falls through the stained-glass panels coloring the upper vent windows; once you've seen the rich brocaded tapestries used to cover the seats, and how the assorted brass accoutrements burnish the dark corners with a velvety copper sheen — once you've seen that, you'll begin to understand what being wealthy meant at the beginning of the 20th century, and how much that differed from the lifestyles of the people who, at about the same time, were homesteading places like Deer Park and Clayton.

Over the border in Alberta's city of Lethbridge, we managed a side trip to Fort Whoop-Up. This is a replica of an American whisky-trade fort built illegally on Canadian soil just after the Civil War. It operated until Canada formed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — the whisky forts being one of the reasons the national territorial police force was formed. As soon as the Mounties appeared, most of the Americans decided they would

be better off on the southern side of the border. Considering that the main trade staple of these forts was fake whisky — industrial alcohol mixed with herbs and coloring in the back room, then poured into brand-name bottles before being traded to the Indians — it's no wonder they made a run for it. The only reason the Americans went to Canada was that it was illegal to sell alcohol to the Indians in Montana — with the United States Army enforcing that rule.

Although just a replica, the fort was loaded with era-specific antiques.

Our next stop was in south-east Alberta, where we toured Medicine Hat's 'Historic Clay District'. The site includes the remains of clay working factory with its original terra cotta kilns. The local historical group has preserved and is restoring much of the old factory and its equipment — plus they have collected several thousand examples of terra cotta and stoneware produced by the factory — objects varying from giant sewer pipes to chicken watering devices.

The original Medicine Hat Pottery Company was founded in 1913 as a corporate extension of the Western Porcelain Manufacturing Company of Spokane. The founder was an American, John A. McIntyre. Since Medicine Hat didn't have any pottery grade clay — only brick grade — the clay for the factory was imported from Washington. Though no mention was made of the actual Washington source for the clay, since the best pottery clay in the Spokane area is from Clayton, it could well have been us.

The reason for McIntyre's interest in Medicine Hat was that the kilns could be fired by an extremely "sweet" and therefore exceptionally clean-burning natural gas — available from wells throughout the area. The original company went out of business within a year — apparently due to the cost of transporting those pottery grade clays from our state. Transportation cost about 10 to 12 dollars a ton (assuming that to be Canadian dollars, circa 1913). We just need to watch the historical records for any mention of Clayton clay going to Alberta in 1912 or '13. If we see such, we might be able to document a

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connection between Clayton and the Medicine Hat Pottery Works

As soon as I heard of the site's existence, the thing I wanted to see the most were the terracotta kilns. I wanted to see how they baffled the ware to prevent direct contact with the combustion gasses — I wanted to see a muffle kiln. It appears that one of the advantages of using the locally available "sweet" natural gas was that the traditional muffle kiln wasn't needed — assumably because the gas wouldn't leave combustion residue on the wares like wood or coal stoked fires would. Since the people on site weren't experts in industrial kilns, they couldn't confirm that for me. So I still don't have a good idea of how the baffles were put around the wares in the Clayton kilns. But I did get a lot of photos relevant to Clayton — including details of the iron expansion bands used around the circular kilns, and a good look at the perforated, down-draft floors.

Leaving Medicine Hat, we headed south toward the border. Along the way we saw a sign announcing "no services for the next 137 kilometers". And they weren't kidding. Miles of grazing range interrupted by an occasional farm, but nothing even remotely resembling a store, gas station, or business of any kind. In a few places emergency phones were set along the road — which was a nice amenity, assuming you didn't die of thirst or loneliness before finding one.

When we finally reached the border, we handed the Border Patrol agent our passports and driver's licenses. The wife also included her 'alien resident' card.

I know it's hot, boring, and thankless to be stationed at a crossing called the "Port of Wild Horse" — especially since you have to drive another 45 miles into Montana before you find a real town — or at least a wide place in the road with live people. So I guess the agents stationed in places like that play little games to keep from going insane. In this case, it was the 'too many documents' game.

The agent said we didn't need to hand him our driver's licenses along with our passports. And my wife didn't even need to show him her Canadian passport when coming back into the States — her 'alien resident' card would do fine.

Well, okay. I didn't think supplying more documentation than needed was a big deal. But knowing the first rule of border crossing — you must never give a Border Patrol agent even the

slightest hint that you're questioning his or her authority — we just smiled and nodded.

Apparently that wasn't sufficient.

The car behind us was a good 'five minutes' behind us. So for the next five minutes, we heard how we didn't have to show him those other documents again — and again — and again. In fact, during one rendition, I believe that the gentleman was attempting to speak to my wife in what he believed to be the official dialect of British Columbia — just in case Pat didn't understand American English. He did this by ending each of his sentences with the customary Canadian interrogative "eh".

Pat seldom uses that expression. And I only use it when I want to irritate her. I could tell I wasn't the only one who could irritate Pat, and I really wanted to get going before Pat reminded the Border Patrol agent about that little border incident during the War of 1812 — and maybe the whisky-fort episodes too. I wanted to leave before Pat began grilling him about his thoughts concerning such massive paramilitary incursions into Canadian by Americans — and how he intended to keep such riffraff from heading north in the future.

Canadians know their history, and are not nearly as passive as some Americans would like to think.

Luckily, as soon as the next southbound expatriate arrived for interrogation, we were waved on. Once beyond any likely audio monitoring, I turned to my wife and said, "That was rather unique — eh?"

On the final leg of our trip we stopped in Bozeman to see the Museum of the Rockies. That, and the encompassing campus of Montana State University, is the home turf of world famous paleontologist Jack Horner — the gentleman who first discovered dinosaur eggs in Montana. The museum is primarily devoted to dinosaurs — though it does have a pioneer section, touring-exhibit section, mineral section, and planetarium. Though not quite as large or inclusive as Alberta's Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, it does have a mineral display that will make your mouth water. I'd give it a triple A rating — especially since it's only a couple of miles off Interstate 90 (if you're going that way anyway).

I'd also point out that they used some unique methods of displaying vintage Americana. Specifically they built an entire mom and pop service station, circa 1930, in the pioneer room, and

showed how the interior of the home would be decorated by cutting asymmetric portions of the home's walls away and replacing those portions with glass.

If you're in the Bozeman area, and have a

few extra hours, be sure to visit one of the best museums in our region.

Inga Erickson Honored on 90th Birthday August — 1983

Paul Erickson found the following type-written article about his grandmother's 90th birthday party. After numerous telephone calls, Paul could not determine the article's author, or whether the article had ever been formally published. Because of the quotes and details included, the article is reproduced below in its entirety.

Friends and relatives assembled August 13, 1983, in Spokane, Washington, to congratulate Inga Erickson on her 90th birthday. The party had been arranged by her cousin, Eleanor Gustafson, who lives nearby. It was a beautiful, sunny day, and the festivity was held on the lawn.

Inga is in good condition in view of her 90 years. She lives in her own home and has been an enthusiastic gardener until this year. This spring a neighbor took over the garden. "I get all the vegetables I need for the loan of the garden spot," Inga said.

Both Inga and her sister Seena Taylor who is two years older and lives in Bellevue, were born in a little log cabin which their father built near Deer Park north of Spokane. "But you know there wasn't any town called Deer Park at that time," Inga explained. "Father had to take a packsack and walk through the pine forest to buy necessities. It was a distance of 25 miles to Spokane and he never stayed overnight. Later it became easier when he got a horse and wagon."

Inga's parents, Anton Iverson and his wife Ingeborg Mandfloen, emigrated from the forest community of Trysil in Osterdalen, Norway. They weren't the only 'Tryslinger' who got the urge at that time to go west to buy 'railroad land' quite reasonably from the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. Westby, a couple of Grambo families, and others settled there about the same time.

Inga said that her father came directly from Norway, but that her mother had come first to Moorhead, Minnesota, in 1887. At the same time



Inga Louise Iverson-Erickson — 1911

her brother Lars Mandfloen and her sisters Serine and Lise came. They found many from Trysil in the Red River Valley. Serine married Halvor Strandvoid and Lise married Ole Grambo.

In 1901 these pioneers built the Trysil church northeast of Deer Park. Many familiar Trysil names can be seen on the tombstones in the churchyard. Inga has many good memories from that old church. "But now they've moved the church into town," Inga sighed. She is now a member of Holy Cross Lutheran in Spokane.

A couple of months before her sixth birthday Inga's mother died. It was difficult for Iverson to take care of two little girls. For awhile he had the help of his cousin Alethe Lutness. "After she left us,

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Seena lived at Erling Westbys. Mrs. Westby was Father's sister. I lived with my uncle and aunt, Ole and Lise Grambo. Later we came home again to live when a neighbor woman, Anna Olsen, became our housekeeper," Inga explained.

In 1902 Ole and Lise Grambo and their daughter Serina moved to Prosser, Washington. Inga remembers so well the day they left. "Father took them to Spokane in the old wagon. We three little girls had so much fun where we sat on hay and quilts in the back of the wagon. We stopped on the way so that we and the horses could have food. But I don't remember a thing about the trip home. I guess Seena and I slept the whole way," Inga laughed.

When Inga was older she also went to Prosser. Her uncle Ole Grambo had become a widower and he asked Inga to come and live with him and help Serena with the housekeeping.

It was in Prosser that Inga became engaged to Carl Alfred Erickson. He was also of Trysil descent. His grandparents on his mother's side were Martin and Martea (Ørbekkedalin) Strandvold. Inga and Carl were married in Walla Walla in 1920. For awhile the newlyweds lived in Idaho. Later they bought a farm close to Deer Park. They had two sons, Jim and John. Jim lives in Palo Alto, California, and John is a businessman in Deer Park. After Inga became a widow in 1949 she lived in Prosser awhile, but later moved back to Spokane. She had four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

One day — after World War II — Inga was pleasantly surprised when she received a long letter from a second cousin in Trysil. She found out that she had many relatives across the ocean. "I got such a desire to see Trysil, where my parents were from," Inga said. In 1973 this dream became a reality.

It was no problem for Inga to talk with relatives over there because she hadn't forgotten the

old-time Trysil dialect learned from her parents.

With such a background it is easy to understand that her 90th birthday became a little Trysil fest. Most of those at the gathering had their roots in "the community east, near the Kiolen Mountains." Both of her sons were present, John's wife Kathryn and daughter Barbara. Other guests were Dick and Emma Grace Norton from Bremerton, Melva Grambo Fuller from Medical Lake, Thoralf and Evangeline Storwick from Stanwood. From Spokane, Ernest and Helen Grambo, Florence Arneberg Gilbert, Herman and Mathilda Anderson, Laura Cardinal, Larry Welch, and the day's hosts, Eleanor and Andy Gustafson. Most of those present were descended from well-known Trysil farms — Grønness, Bernts, Mandfloen, Strandvold, and Grambo. Inga's grandparents on her mother's side were Lars Mandfloen from Grønness and her grandmother Siri was from Bernts.

A short program was arranged by Inga's cousin Emma Grace. She read a poem "To Inga" which she had written, and others were given an opportunity to say nice things about the honor guest. Earnest Grambo thanked her for the concern she had always had for his uncle Ole Grambo in his later years. A fine dinner was served, which had a Norwegian touch because there was both lefse and rømmegrøt. Of course the foremost feature was a decorated cake with the number 90 on it.

Among the many congratulations were greetings from Reidar Skjaeraasen in Trysil, and Kaja Bodung in Oslo. Later in the evening guests looked at slides Emma Grace and Dick Norton took in Trysil this summer.

It was a memorable day not only for Inga, but for everyone present.

"Bygden der langt øst ved Kjølen" — a familiar line from "Trysil Sangen."

**Coming Soon — Collected Newsletters
Prior Mortarboard Issues Available In Booklet Format**

Within the next month or two the society intends to begin publishing a series of booklet titled "The Collected Newsletters". Each volume will be a 48 page booklets containing previously uncollected issues of the Mortarboard. These booklets will be available for a small donation. Keep watch where-

ever issues of our continuing series "The Reports" are available, or contact the society directly at ...

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