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.

The Story Beneath Leno Prestini’s Sketch
“Hell at Dawn”
— by —
Wally Lee Parker
(Reprint from the Bogwen Report — used by permission)

Sketch. Believed to be colored pencil on heavy art paper. The original sketch is 12 inches high and 18 inches long. The artist is Leno Prestini. Date of completion – December, 1958. Given to Warren Nord by Leno Prestini shortly after completion. “Artwork reproduced by permission. Photo by Wally Lee Parker.”
Laid down in colored pencil on heavy drawing paper, Leno Prestini’s “Hell at Dawn” is a cartoonish 12 by 18 inch sketch depicting the relocation of the old Clayton Grange from its original lot on the west side of Clayton to a nearby farm — there to serve out the rest of its life as a barn. Though simple in concept and execution, the drawing still betrays the hand of an accomplished artist. And though Leno is rightly considered the historic soul of his hometown, none but Clayton’s oldest residents — those old enough to recall the day in 1963 that the artist succumbed to a self-inflicted wound — remember why he should be considered such. As a reminder, this summer three of the region’s smaller historical societies are reintroducing Leno to the newer generations by exhibiting extensive examples of his works. Of those works, the sketch he titled “Hell at Dawn” is only a minor piece. But this, like most all of Leno’s art, has a story to tell.

After 117 years, Clayton is a town struggling against overwhelming odds to stay alive. Its history began in the summer of 1889 — a few years before the town’s official founding — when the newly formed Spokane Falls & Northern Railroad was hurriedly laying tracks north toward Colville. The railroad carved a sweeping curve through the dense woods to better align the tracks for the grade upward to Loon Lake. A siding — Allen’s Siding — was placed along the east to west portion of that curve. No one is sure who the aforementioned Allen in Allen’s Siding was — nor if the sawmill loading its lumber at the new siding was in operation before the railroad came. And no one recalls who discovered the deposits of fine quality clay underlying the area. But late in the year 1892, William Brook and Joseph Spear of Spokane’s Washington Brick, Lime, & Manufacturing Company decided to build a factory on the north side of Allen’s Siding — and the next year platted a company town just to the south of the railroad tracks to support their new factory. Somewhere in the process, the name Allen’s Siding was lost and the new town was christened Clayton.

In May of 1906, Luigi Prestini, at the suggestion of his already immigrated brother Ferdinando, left his wife and children in Bassano, Italy, and came to America — obtaining work at the granite quarries in Barre, Vermont. On the 28th of April, 1908, Luigi’s wife Caterina, with their young sons, Battista and Leno, boarded the steam ship La Provence at the French port of Havre and sailed for New York’s Ellis Island — finding her way to Barre a short time after landing.

Luigi’s brother Ferdinando had settled in the City of Spokane in the summer of 1900. In 1911, at Ferdinando’s invitation, Luigi, Caterina, and their sons left Vermont to stay on Ferdinando’s 40 acre farm just a few miles west of Buckeye in northern Spokane County. A year or two after arriving,
Luigi obtained work at the Clayton brick plant and by 1913 had moved his family to Clayton — becoming part of the town’s growing Italian community.

Eventually, son Leno started work in the brick plant’s terra cotta factory and by the mid 1920s was well on his way to becoming a master clay modeler. As his older brother Battista often stated, at a young age Leno had demonstrated an inborn skill as a sculptor — a skill Battista didn’t share.

Likely due to his artistic temperament and habitual wanderlust, Leno chose to remain single. During the 1930s, based primarily on his oil paintings, he began to build a regional reputation as an artist — though his works, often quirky, editorial, and darkly personal, in large part tended to be statements the area’s working class residents wouldn’t care to hang on their living room walls.

The economics of the Great Depression, combined with the general movement away from terra cotta ornamentation in architecture, pushed Clayton’s terra cotta works into decline, and by the end of World War II the terra cotta portion of Clayton’s Washington Brick & Lime Factory had shut down. With that, the few remaining terra cotta craftsmen retired or drifted away.

After returning from duty with World War II’s Army Air Force, Leno supported himself by working when he needed money, but otherwise lived a bohemian lifestyle. In the 1950s, he often traveled to California — where common wisdom asserted, his art would find a more receptive and well-heeled audience. Said wisdom proved to be in error as Leno habitually came back, without recognition from the larger artistic community, to the small shack that served as his Clayton studio — Vagabond House.

It’s commonly supposed among Leno’s acquaintances that the constant rejection of his art, mixed with the psychological damage his widely rumored less than wise romantic pursuits had induced, accumulated into the last of at least several suicidal spirals.

With the Great Depression, Clayton had slipped into a sleepy twilight which the town couldn’t reverse. Business failures, suspicious fires, and neglect left its once thriving main street a dusty dream. And then, in the late summer of 1957, the brick kilns’ last fires were extinguished and the factory Brook and Spear had founded was boarded shut and slated for demolition.

Clayton lingered on as a community. And like many small communities, the neighbors seemed to have a good handle on

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everyone else’s business. If that business was interesting enough, it was sure to draw a crowd.

One such crowd gathered on the first day of December, 1958, to watch the problems plaguing the men trying to move the old Clayton Grange Hall to its new home southwest of town. The frame building was 62 feet long, 30 wide, and 30 high. Although the journey was only perhaps half a mile, in order to avoid as many tight turns and overhead power lines as possible, it had been decided to drag the heavy load across open fields for the majority of that distance. The problem spot along the proposed route was likely to be a low, swampy area to the east of Beaver Creek — just over halfway to the new foundation. It seemed reasonable to Warren Nord, his dad Clarence, his brother Lyle, and Bob Herendeen — the contractor and family friend that had been hired to move the building from its Clayton lot to Clarence Nord’s farm — to wait until the ground was frozen firm. But waiting too long ran the risk that the move might flounder beneath the heavy snows that traditionally began falling across Washington State’s northeast corner right around Christmas time. And while moving over frozen ground was a good plan, everyone, even the contractor, was surprised with just how massive the old grange hall actually was. As Warren Nord said, “We think the old building was put up around 1919. Back in those days, a 2x4 was actually 2 inches by 4 inches. And a one inch thick plank was pretty close to a full inch thick.”

According to the daily journal kept by Warren’s mother, Wilda Nord, The 1st of December was “cloudy” with “showers,” and the men “worked late,” and “got wet and muddy.” Among those men was Clayton’s resident artist, Leno Prestini.

As Warren recalls, “When the move got down into the swamp, the dolly-wheels and GMC truck supporting the old grange hall began breaking through the frozen crust. The guys would jack the wheels up while they shoveled down into the mud beneath the wheels. When they’d gotten enough clearance, they’d push planks, timbers, whatever they had under the tires and make a couple of more feet before they’d bog down again.”

This December adventure began on 28th of August when Clayton Grange #456 bought the historic brick and terra cotta Moose Hall on Clayton’s main street from the local school district for $2,100. The grange’s old wooden meeting hall was put up for silent bid. The Nord family, needing more outbuildings on their farm, decided that this building with its sturdy second floor loft, would make a good barn. Warren placed a bid of $431. And on October 18th the transfer of ownership was signed — with the caveat that unless Warren was willing to spend another hundred dollars for the land the old grange was sitting on, the building would have to be removed within several months.

Already assured that the bid had been accepted, the details of the upcoming move (Continued on page 341)
were, during the first weekend in October, worked out with Bob Herendeen. And, since the really hard kind of freezes expected later in the year could cause freshly poured concrete to crumble, the third weekend of the month saw the Nord men and several of their neighbors rushing under an unrelenting chill drizzle to pour the building’s new foundation — leaving a 22 foot wide gap in both narrow ends so the new barn could be pulled over top.

On the 14th of November, Wilda Nord wrote in her journal “first snow, about 2 or 3 inches.” A few days before the two-story brick chimney had been dismantled and the large, artfully cast ‘Mammoth’ brand-iron woodstove that had heated the old hall for many years was taken to the Nord farm — where it still heats a workshop.

The hall never had inside plumbing, so there weren’t any pipes to worry about. And a simple disconnect took care of the electrical.

During the last three days of November, the final preparations were made. Bob Herendeen brought in his hydraulic jacks — some of them, as Warren Nord recalls, “so big it took two men to lift them.”

By the end of the third day, the entire building had been elevated and long steel beams were pulled under its length and jacked into place. Two four-wheel dollies were attached under the steel beams toward the rear of the building and Bob’s heavy duty GMC truck was positioned at the front. According to Leno’s drawing, a transverse beam — probably a heavy timber — was chained to the longitudinal steel beams protruding from under the front of the grange. That wooden beam, along with the front of the building, was eased down onto the pivot over the truck’s rear wheels. This tricycle arrangement of truck and dollies was likely the best possible — considering the uneven ground ahead.

The mover, Bob Herendeen, was something of a local character. Warren recalls that his family moved into the Clayton area in 1938 and onto their farm in 1941. Bob first appeared in the Clayton area several years after that.

Former Deer Park resident Paul Erickson sketched out Bob’s appearance. “He was heavy and rotund, at least from my then pint-sized perspective, and spoke with a distinctive gruffness. Despite that, he seemed a nice guy — happy, approachable. He usually wore loose fitting bib overalls, often dirty from crawling around under buildings.”

This photo shows the old Clayton grange as it is being moved across Olson Road on the first part of the building’s journey to its new location. The photo looks to the west. The date was recorded as December 1st, 1958, and the time shortly after 8 a.m. Leno Prestini’s pickup is seen in the foreground. The person noted standing at the left rear corner of the building is believed to be Lyle Nord. “Courtesy of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society – from the Jean Nord collection”

Charles Stewart remembers Bob elevating a house his family once owned at Loon Lake so a basement could be placed beneath. “Though Bob was thick and round, he could wriggle into really tight places. He always seemed to be carrying a shovel. It didn’t seem (Continued on page 342)
to bother him to have a kid — me — hanging around, though he never offered to explain what he was doing and didn’t encourage questions.”

“When things got tough, Bob would sing to himself — lyrics and tune unintelligible. The tighter and dirtier the situation, the louder Bob would wail. Only later did I figure out that Bob might have been singing in Danish — which would explain why he had “The Crazy Dane” lettered on his truck’s doors.”

For moving the old Clayton Grange, Herendeen charged the Nord family $300.00.

Helpers and observers began gathering at the old grange before light on the morning of December 1st. A few minutes after 8 o’clock, Milton Strong, a lineman with Inland Power & Light, arrived to drop the power lines running along the north side of the county road. As soon as the lines were down, the building began moving south.

Directly across Olson Road was the home of Sol Twidwell. The grange was pulled to the road, then across the blacktop at a diagonal so it would miss Twidwell’s garage on its way to Lyle Nord’s field. Likely it was the twisting stress placed on the dolly’s solid axles as each dolly’s heavily loaded double duel wheels were turned across the county road’s paved surface that did it, but as the hall rolled into Lyle’s field the axle on one of the dollies snapped. Clayton mechanic Marvin Calicoat was called out to weld it. That problem consumed the rest of the morning. It was afternoon before barbwire fences were dropped and the building began moving again, this time across property owned by Charley Larsen and then down toward the worrisome swamp along the bottom of Clarence Nord’s pasture.

The power-lines were only down for 20 or so minutes. But as Warren noted, if the axle had snapped while the grange was sitting crosswise on the blacktop, everyone whose power was disrupted for however long it took to get the building moving again would have had something unkind to say. Whether or not they would have actually said such was another matter.

As the building rolled toward the expected problem area just to the east of Beaver Creek, the hope was that the surface would be frozen far enough down to support the building’s weight. If the wheels broke through into the sub-irrigate muck below, it was feared that the building might just have to stay there permanently.

And they did break through.

One thing was for certain — if the building sat mired in the freezing bog overnight, come morning it would take pickaxes to chop away the frozen mud. So from mid afternoon until 8 o’clock that night, with shovels and planks, Bob Herendeen, Clarence and Lyle Nord, Tom Scriven, Sol Twidwell, Harry Jose, and Leno Prestini struggled in the cold mud.

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This photo is believed to show the grange hall in the field just south of Olson Road – either Lyle Nord or Charley Larsen’s field. The date, December 1st, 1958. The pickup in the foreground is believed to be Bob Herendeen’s. “Courtesy of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society – from the Jean Nord collection”

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They managed to move the hall forward a foot or two at a time until it rested on the solid ground rising from the south side of the bog. When Warren got home from his job in Spokane, he found the moving crew muddy, wet, and exhausted — and worried that when the move resumed in the morning the increasing rise to the south would prove too much for Bob’s already overloaded truck. As the men conferred, it seemed likely that come dawn there would be still more hell to pay.

The next morning’s scene was captured in Leno Prestini’s sketch. Ken Kratzer, one of the Nord’s neighbors, brought his 40 horsepower 1938 McCormick-Deering TD35 crawler to push against the rear of the building. To assist Bob Herendeen’s GMC truck, a tow-line was hooked to the Nord’s four-cylinder 20 horsepower Farmall Super C tractor. And then Bob Herendeen’s pickup was attached by line to the right front corner of the building’s support.

In the sketch, the other vehicle shown sitting off to the side was Warren Nord’s 1951 Chevy 1-ton. Warren still has the Farmall tractor shown in the drawing. And a resident living just east of Clayton, Ray Hall, is currently restoring the McCormick-Deering crawler.

With all pulling and pushing in consort, the grange slowly moved up the hill into the pasture west of the Nord’s farm — at which point something in Bob’s GMC’s engine broke. The front of the grange had to be jacked up so the GMC could be pulled out. Then the truck was towed to Marvin Calicoat’s garage in Clayton for overnight repairs.

Repositioned the next morning, Bob’s truck pulled the grange through the 22 foot wide gap on the west side of its new foundation. Jacks were used to lower it onto the foundation. And Herendeen’s part of the job was done.

Over the next few weeks, the Nords filled the gaps in the foundation and cut a ten by ten foot door in the east end of their new barn — a building currently believed to be only nine years shy of its hundredth birthday.

Leno Prestini stopped by the Nord’s farm a short time after the move and gave his sketch to Warren — not unusual since most of Leno’s works in private hands were originally given as gifts to this or that person. Warren rolled the sketch and tied it with string, then placed it in the corner of a dresser drawer. It lay there for a number of years — until Warren got married. His wife, Rainy, found the drawing. Seeing that it was an original Prestini, she told Warren, “This needs to be taken care of.” The drawing was carefully framed behind glass and has since become one of the family’s prized mementos.

From a commercial perspective, Leno’s artistry was not successful during his lifetime — with only a handful of his paintings having been sold. Nor has his art done well

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This photo shows the entire Nord family – from left to right – son Warren Nord, father Clarence Nord, son Lyle Nord, and mother Wilda Nord. The photo is believed to date from 1949. “Courtesy of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society – from the Jean Nord collection”

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since. The highest price ever paid for a Prestini is believed to be $500.00 — that for a nude purchased from a private collector in the summer of 2008 by the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society. But as time has passed, two things have become apparent. The historical value of Leno Prestini’s art far surpasses what this lack of monetary appreciation might suggest. And the time for a careful reevaluation of Leno as an artist is long overdue.

Leno has long been dismissed as nothing more than a self-taught folk artist. Within that self-taught label lies the implication that his artistic techniques are not particularly sophisticated. However, as far as is currently known Leno did obtain the equivalence of formal training during his apprenticeship at Clayton’s terra cotta works in the 1920s. While his training was not academic, it appears he learned his craft well. And as for the overall tendency to interpret his work as folk art, this is probably a misinterpretation of his artistic sensibilities based on the country and western themed content of some of his more popular paintings. Closer inspection suggests that a good portion of his work evokes an artistic philosophy in tune with some of the more avant-garde trends of the 1920s and ‘30s. Once people allow themselves to see beyond this learned tendency to lower their expectations in Leno’s case, they will find far more in Leno’s art than traditionally assumed.

To speed up this much needed reevaluation, this August, three area organizations will present a collective retrospective of Leno’s art and life. From August 7th through the 22nd the Stevens County Historical Society will have 70 plus paintings — including some of Leno’s most controversial — and several of his surviving terra cotta sculptures, as well as other memorabilia, on display at 251 North Main Street in downtown Colville. On the weekends of August 14th and 21st, the Loon Lake Historical Society — custodians of Loon Lake’s historic schoolhouse — will have several of Leno’s larger paintings from their own collection as well as various borrowed works available for inspection at the schoolhouse at 4000 Colville Road in Loon Lake. The Loon Lake group also has in their collection some of the most unique items of Prestini memorabilia known to exist. On those same weekends, the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society will have two of its Prestini nudes on display at the Clayton Grange Hall — the former Clayton Moose Temple. Also on display will be pieces of Prestini artwork on loan — including the sketch “Hell at Dawn” — as well as other miscellaneous artifacts. The Clayton Grange Hall is located on Railroad Avenue — Clayton’s main street. All three of these sites will also be showing numerous photos and other materials related to Leno’s life and Clayton’s clay industry.

All these venues will be open from 10 am to 4 pm on the indicated days, and admission is free. For more information, these various organizations can be contacted online.
Repairs and beautification of the terra cotta eagle are proceeding in Clayton. The old grout was removed by Bill Sebright, Jeff Lilly and Pete Coffin. Our experts, Lyle Thompson and Tom Taylor have completed the grouting and epoxy crack filling. The eagle’s coat was roughed up and washed today. Painting may be started as early as tomorrow, June 24. Meanwhile the landscaping has been going on around the pedestal at the Clayton Drive-In.

The excitement is mounting.

**Calendar of Events**

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<td>Eagle Dedication</td>
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<td>Leno Prestini Show</td>
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<td>Loon Lake Old School Museum, LLHS</td>
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<td>C/DPHS meeting</td>
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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

CORRECTION TO MOTORBOARD #26 and COLLECTED NEWSLETTERS Volume 7. On page 326, in the second paragraph on the left column it is written that Majorie Irene Mason was the daughter of Roy Mason. That is in error, she was the daughter of James Mason.

Society president, Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. He introduced Dick Hazelmyer. Dick told us how he is related to the Masons (His late wife was James Mason’s daughter. James, Roy, and Hubert were all brothers). He also told us of his interest and work with Veteran concerns.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported that there is $4413.00 in checking. Mark paid the THN (The Heritage Network) dues for $20.00, $50 for DP Chamber of Commerce dues, and to Sharon Clark for Mortarboard supplies, $213.03. A powder coating invoice on the Eagle pedestal has not yet been received.

Grace Hubal reported that recipes are slowly coming in. She will start putting the cookbook together this fall. Please contact her for the forms to submit recipes.

Sharon handed out Mortarboard # 26. She reported that her great uncle’s death was recorded in the Mason diary. She has received (Continued on page 347)
an article about Leno Prestini’s painting of “Hell at Dawn” from Wally Parker. It is the story of Warren Nord moving the old Grange Hall to his farm. Lots of pictures were passed around. She contacted the grandson of Doc Slater. We are going to publish the article that his son wrote, in the history of the DP Congregational Church—the grandson lives on Whidby Island. She passed around pictures of Doc Slater and his family, and also of him painting, as he was an artist.

Pete Coffin reported the Eagle pedestal is in place and the Eagle is in Rehms’s garage around the corner. Unwrapping the Eagle was more difficult than we thought, but is done. Pete, Jeff Lilly, and Bob Clouse met with Tom Taylor and Lyle Thompson. Both are retired masons. They gave us a formula for grout to repair the seams and cracks in the Eagle. Monday morning will be the start of the eagle restoration project. We will open up the cracks, clean out the seams and fill them. We will find out how the loose head is attached and repair it. Curing will take about a month. We will take a “field trip” to see the Eagle after today’s meeting. Pete is also working on a DP time line. Pete welcomes any comments on his writings.

Bob Clouse reported Website hits were 200 less than the month before just over 2400.

Florene Moore reported on a very successful ‘Friends of the Deer Park Library’ book sale. There were donations of $948 for the sale. Florene presented Mark with a check of $683.21 for CDPHS’s Eagle Project. Volunteers for setting up and for the sale were, Florene, Grace Hubal, Kay Parkin, Ann Stelting, Art Stelting, Sharon Clark, Penny Hutten, Betty Burdette, Anni Sebright, and Bill Sebright. Bob and Mary Clouse stopped by with a donation. Marilyn and Fay Reilly donate the space for the book sale and book storage. A “big thank” you goes to all!

Bill reported that Janette Marlow had contacted him about the Society renting her barn for our museum. The barn is located just north of the Clayton Drive In. Her mom owns the house, she owns the barn. The main floor has been remodeled into a living area. It would only need to be cleaned before we could use it. A toilet seal has to be replaced as well as the chimney pipe. There are tables and chairs that we would be able to use. Bill told her that we would probably not have time to work on this until after the eagle project and the Prestini project are over. Discussion followed. Concerns were: insurance, lease option, rent amount, and being a wooden structure. Betty Burdette strongly commented that insurance is extremely high on a wood structure and people aren’t willing to house their artifacts in a museum that is made of wood. Bill will contact Janet.

De Pelan is from the Loon Lake Historical Society, publisher of the Loon Lake Times, past president of The Heritage Network, and the person in charge of printing post cards and fliers for the upcoming Prestini exhibits in August. She handed out both flyers and post cards. We are to either hand them out or mail them to friends and family.

Penny Hutten announced that this coming Thursday, June 17, 2010, Jerry Numbers will be speaking at the Westerner’s Spokane Corral on the Centennial of Fathers’ Day. Sonora Dodd is the founder of Fathers’ Day. Sonora Dodd’s granddaughter is coming from Austria. Please contact Penny if you want to attend, by Sunday night. Penny will send a link to CDPHS members with email.

Sharon Clark talked to Ann Fackenthal, who is with the Westerners group and the Williams Valley Grange Hall. She said that Ann has a lot of historical artifacts pertaining to the grange hall from when it began to the present. Ann suggested we can have a joint meet-
(Continued from page 347)

Editorial Policy Regarding Correcting Errors and/or Omissions

Information published here is compiled from many sources, including personal memories. It is often difficult or impossible to verify such recollections through outside documentation. Our editorial policy toward the veracity of personal recollections tends toward the casual—since little harm is normally done by such errors. But our editorial process also invites public review and input regarding the accuracy of the information we publish, and when such review either suggests or reveals errors or items open to dispute our “Letters” department will act as a forum allowing the airing of such disagreements in an effort to ascertain the truth and correct any probable or demonstrated errors. We also believe it’s important that such disagreements be recorded, even if they can’t be settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

We encourage everyone to submit any arguments as to fact to the editor in writing—since the written form reduces the chance of further misunderstandings. As is standard policy, all letters will be edited for spelling, word usage, clarity, and—if necessary—contents. If advisable, the editor will confer directly with the letter writers to insure that everyone’s comments and corrections are submitted in a literate, polite, and compelling manner—as best suits the editorial image of this society’s publications.

Society Want Ads

WANTED: Leno Prestini artwork. If you have or have access to any paintings, sketches, or sculptures created by Clayton artist Leno Prestini please contact the Society. We would like to feature either the original artwork or photos of the same at this year’s Prestini Project showing. For security reasons, the current owners of the materials may remain anonymous if that is their wish.

WANTED: Old family recipes for inclusion in a future Society recipe book. Recipes drawn from any given family’s heritage are particularly desired—especially if accompanied by related family stories. Please submit to Grace Hubal, Society Secretary.

WANTED: Any stories, photos, or examples of traditional methods of quilt making.

WANTED. Information and photos regarding the history of Trysil/Zion Lutheran Church.

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