

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
CLAYTON/DEER PARK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Mortarboard

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Oliver Olson and the National Guard's Eagle

By: Peter Coffin

INTRODUCTION

During the dedication of the National Guard's eagle at the Clayton Drive In, a file of material which contained clippings, interviews and pictures pertaining to the construction, placement and subsequent moving of the eagle was given to Bill Sebright, the Clayton-Deer Park Historical Society's President, by Art Ohler. Art had received the packet from Brigadier General (Retired) Terry L. Reed. Art was part of the crew moving and repairing the eagle in the 1980s. In that material was a two page typed description written by Oliver Olson describing how the eagle was constructed along with many new pictures of the 1980s moving operation and Geiger Field dedication. It was a bit rough having been written by a man late in his life so I edited the manuscript to make it read more smoothly.

OLIVER OLSON THE MAN

Oliver Olson was born on Feb 15, 1900 in Clayton to Martin Olson and Anna Satre, both

Norwegian immigrants. In 1916 at age 16, he began working at the Washington Brick and Lime Plant in Clayton and worked there until he enlisted in the United States Navy in 1918.



Figure 1: A photograph of Oliver Olson in his World War I Navy uniform
(Art Stelling Photograph)

After being discharged from the Navy in November of 1919, he returned to the Washington Brick and Lime Plant and began working in the terra cotta shop as a plaster mold maker. During the time period from 1922 to 1923, he was responsible for casting the parts of the National Guard Eagle.

In a newspaper article (Polly Lane, *Spokesman Review*), he is recorded as saying that, "...usually the ornaments were designed in small plaster casts by the building architect." From that point a sculptor would be hired to mold a clay model that was then used to form a plaster-of-paris cast. Then pressers in the terra cotta shop would press the clay-sand mix into the cast to form the

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final piece to be glazed and fired in a kiln. The glaze was a glassy finishing cover for weather protection.

In another newspaper article (*Spokesman Review*, July 3, 1960), Oliver Olson's company, Spokane Ornamental Plaster and Stone Works, North 2914 Napa, in Spokane is featured. This article contains a picture of him and his employee displaying a plaster casting mold form. From the article, it is apparent that Mr. Olson formed his company in 1932 after leaving Clayton's Washington Brick and Lime Company. The manuscript, printed on Spokane Ornamental Plaster and Stone Works letterhead, lists the company's address at North 4328 Hawthorne Street as well.

Figure 2: (left) A picture of Oliver Olson late in his career (*Art Stelling Photograph*)

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OLIVER OLSON'S DESCRIPTION OF THE EAGLE CONSTRUCTION

The following is his manuscript in italics:

PHONE FAIRFAX 9-2322

SHOP: HU-7-6803

CAST STONE

PRE-CAST CONCRETE

Spokane Ornamental Plaster and Stone Works

O. J. OLSON, MANAGER

NORTH 4328 HAWTHORNE STREET

SPOKANE. WASHINGTON

This is Oliver J. Olson, and I am supposed to describe how the Eagle, which I understand is to be re-located at Geiger field, was made. I started to work for the Washington Brick and Lime Company when I was about sixteen years old in the town of Clayton, Washington where the Eagle was made in a terra cotta shop. I worked there until World War I began, and I enlisted in the navy. After being discharged in November 1919, I started to work in the terra cotta shop again as a plaster mold maker.

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The eagle, the construction of which I am going to try to describe, was made in 1922 for the National Guard Armory here in Spokane. I was asked to tell how this eagle was made. Starting out, we use plaster models on which modeling clay has to be placed. Modeling clay is smooth and something like a heavy putty, heavy enough so it will stay in place.

Several plaster models for the eagle had to be made and then stacked on top of one another on a easel to the planned height and width of the eagle. Then the clay was placed on these models to the desired thickness. The Washington Brick and Lime Company had a sculptor (we always called him a Modeler). The sculptor, Mr. Victor J. Schneider, whom I had known since 1916 when I began working at the terra cotta factory, sculpted the Eagle in clay. He is shown in the picture beside the Eagle. I do not remember the architects that designed the eagle. After the modeler had finished, the eagle was taken down in sections to the plaster shop where plaster molds were made. After the sectional plaster molds cured, they were then taken to the pressing room where men called pressers, press clay into these molds, and tamp the clay around the sides & bottom about to a thickness of one inch, maybe a little thinner. (I did work as a presser for a time.) Then clay for partitions is pressed to the inside of the terra cotta piece to strengthen it. The number of partitions depended on the size of the terra cotta piece. Each piece had a number on it which was put on the model when it was cast so that the bricklayers will know where each piece goes according to the plans drawn by the draftsman.

After the cast piece had dried a couple days, it is sent to the finisher who smooths and edges the piece, cuts hand holes in the sides for handling and holes for connecting the pieces into the finished sculpture or tying the piece to the building where it is to be placed. After finishing, the piece is taken to the curing room where it is cured (dried out) for about a week. When cured, the piece is ready for glazing. First, the piece is sprayed with a very thin spray called slip which dries quickly. The glaze is a chemical mix sprayed over the slip which gives the piece its final color and smooth surface. I think that at that time the glaze came from England. It was the chemist's job to calculate the mix of different clays, grout and glaze used to make the terra cotta piece to allow for shrinkage.

The glazed pieces were stacked in the kilns and fired in a heavy red fire for five or six days. The kiln had peep holes, near which were placed three or four small cones of special clay. These cones melt at certain temperatures and when the last cone melts, the firing of the kiln is stopped. The kiln is not emptied for about a week while the terra cotta pieces cool. The pieces were then taken to the fitting shed where they were laid out on the floor and measured. If the pieces are too long, they are cut to size with air chisels, then placed on a grinding stone to smooth the edges. If you could see the backs of the pieces of the eagle you would see that they are all hollow.

The clay for this Eagle was taken from the pit in Clayton. There were three layers of colored clay in this pit: white, yellow, and brown. The clay was blown out of the pit bank with an explosive charge of half dynamite and half black powder and then hauled in ore cars up to the plant with a winch where it was put in a shed to dry. After it was dry, it was put in a machine called a dry pan where it was ground to a fine dust. Old brick and tile that had been burned was powdered and mixed in with the clay (in what proportion I do not know, that was up to the chemist).

This mix of clay and powdered brick and tile clay was carried by a conveyor into a large bin under which was a pug mill where water was added to bring the mix to the right consistency. This was done at the brickyard. The same process was followed at the terra cotta plant except that the clay was mixed in the basement of the plant where the clay was stored for ageing before being used to make terra cotta. The

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Figure 3: The National Guard's Eagle and the memorial area in Clayton, Washington on August 7, 2010. (Peter Coffin photograph)

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clay for brick making differed from the clay for the Eagle. After ageing for a length of time, the clay was put on wheeled flat carts and taken to the elevator where it was taken to the pressing rooms where the men would cast the Eagle. Going back to the model making, each model had a recess cut in each end and side about 1/2 inch deep. This was done so the mortar would be held in place. I have tried to give you the best description I can give of how the eagle was cast, but after being away from it for 55 years your memory slips a little.

Just a little extra. I worked in the brickyard for a few days, and the foreman asked me to help him put in three shots of dynamite to blow out a clay bank. After doing that, he told me to take the horse (which was used to pull the ore cars to where the winch was) and go behind the powder house. He went after more men. There were three men in the pit when two shots went off. We waited for awhile and two men went back to work. I ran on top of the bank to pull out the fuse on the third shot. Just then the third shot went off. I was thrown back in the pit which was about forty feet deep and regained consciousness three days afterward. I stayed at the terra cotta plant after that. One man was between the ore car and the bank when the shot went off. It broke both of his legs and he was on crutches the for rest of his life.

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The daughter of Victor Schneider, the modeler, sent me those pictures and did the write-ups for the paper. I was surprised by them. I am sorry I could not give you a better description of how the eagle was built. I saw Halley's comet in 1910 and remember it well.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Olson cast stones for many other building in the Inland Northwest and east into Montana for many years. Orders for his cast stone products came from Bozeman to Seattle. He personally worked on the exterior of the original Fox Theatre, the Greek Orthodox Church in Spokane on Washington Street, four buildings at Whitworth College and so many places that in a later interview he says "...so many places I don't remember anymore, you

know." According to his obituary, Mr. Olson died in Spokane in 2002 nearly 102 years of age.

The eagle changed in appearance in the 1980s during the move from the downtown Armory to Geiger Field. Originally the eagle was glazed with a bisque shiny glaze. During the 1984 move to Geiger Field, it was painted in the colors of brown, white and yellow that it wears now, safely back in its home town of Clayton, Washington.

AN UNCOMMON COMMON MAN

Richard Gray and Jean (Gray) Mittlestedter
As Told to Peter Coffin

Many apparently unremarkable people have led lives that in some ways are truly remarkable. One such person was Clarence Edward Gray who lived his final years in Deer Park, Washington. During his later years Mr. Gray worked in the Deer Park Pine sawmill and lived in a house on west Crawford Street with his wife and family of two boys and two girls. He was a quiet unassuming man and not one to tell of his life to anyone, even his own family. His two surviving children have just bits and pieces of the story of his life which was not an easy one, but in some ways filled with adventure and tragedy. Those bits and pieces provide a profile of a man who had conquered adversity and, in no small way, was a successful citizen and human being.

Clarence Edward Gray was born in 1897 in Farmington, Fulton County, Illinois. Farmington is a small town west of Peoria, Illinois in the coal mining area of Illinois where his father was employed as a coal miner. His father was killed in an industrial accident when Mr. Gray was less than 3 years old, and by 1900, he, his brother, sister and mother went to live with her family. Tragedy struck again in 1905 when he was 8 years old, and his mother died. His brother, sister and he went to live with various Gray family uncles. When Mr. Gray was

10 years old, he left school after the fourth grade and began working on area farms. By 1910 he was living with his Uncle Josiah Gray who made a living fishing.

To escape from farming and fishing labor, he enlisted in the Army in Illinois. In the Army, his experience working with multi horse and mule teams was put to use taking care of horse and mule teams, hauling supplies and transporting officers. For a period of time just prior to the First World War, Mr. Gray was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas where the Army was involved in chasing Pancho Villa. During that assignment when he was chauffeuring officers from one place to another, he became acquainted with General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing.

After the death of Pancho Villa and the beginning of World War I, Mr. Gray shipped out to Europe with the American Expeditionary Force. He described the transport ship as a converted cattle ship where accommodations were composed of hammocks hung in the cattle pen areas. After arriving in Europe, he was employed as a muleskinner driving wagons loaded with supplies to the front lines.

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In addition, he was again employed to transport officers, and again he was a driver for General Pershing.



The three older Gray children: Richard, Shirley and Jean. Photos from Deer Park High School classes of 1957 and 1959.

Mr. Gray was a quiet man and said very little about his war experiences and the time he spent in Paris, France and Belgium. His son, Richard, said that Mr. Gray had been close enough to the front lines in the Argonne Forest to see the sky lit up from the artillery fire. When his daughter Jean was writing an essay in a high school history class, she asked her father what was his worst experience in the war. He sat in his chair thinking for a long time. Finally he said, "Killing the horses." When she asked what he meant, he told her that when a gas attack occurred, many horses and mules were affected, were in great pain and making horrible noises. It had been his job to go to the corral and shoot the dying animals. As he told this story he began to cry. It was the first time Jean had ever seen her father cry. As a professional teamster he loved his animals. He himself had been gassed and experienced health problems for the rest of his life.

After the Armistice in 1918, Mr. Gray left the Army, returned to Illinois and lived for a time with another uncle, Cy C. Gray. During the 1920s, Mr. Gray went west to eastern Montana and worked on a large, 800 acre ranch. In 1930, he was living in School District 12, Richland County, Montana and was an employee of Mrs. Susie Harrison.

During the 1930s, he returned to Illinois to marry Margery Hall, and he brought her back to Montana. Miss Hall was also an orphan and had been

employed as domestic help in Illinois after her years in an orphanage. When living in Montana, the Grays began a family. Richard, Shirley and Jean were born there. Richard remembers Mrs. Harrison as his "grandmother" and that she lived with the Gray family until she passed away. Jean remembers her as a "...blessing to me, and (she) gave me love."

During the early 1940s, the Gray family moved to Sandpoint, Idaho and worked for a time in a factory refurbishing furniture during the Second World War. In the late 1940s, the family moved to the Deer Park area and purchased a 80 acre farm on the Spotted Road (according to Sharon (Boyd) Clark it was the south half of the southeast quarter of Section 8—Township 29 North—Range 42 East WM) just west of what was the Shalbetter farm. Three more children were born to the Grays in Washington: Beverly Ann, Butch and Sandra Lee. Again tragedy struck with Beverly and Sandra dying in infancy.

While living at the Spotted Road farm, shortly after the end of World War II, an event took place illustrating the calm courage of our father. One day, a number of police cars arrived at our house, and a number of police officers got out of them with their rifles in their hands. They had been called to restrain a neighbor's son, Hugh, a war veteran, who had apparently been having problems adjusting to civilian life and was threatening his family. He had taken to the woods on our farm. Father told them that he did not want to see anyone hurt and convinced the police to let him go into the woods, unarmed, and see if he could talk the man into surrendering. As children, we were worried for our father, but he did talk the man into surrendering peacefully. To us, this illustrates the calm courage of our "uncommon" Father.

Farming on Spotted Road did not provide a living for the Gray Family, and in approximately 1953, they moved to Deer Park. Mr. Gray took a job at the Deer Park Pine sawmill.

Mr. Gray is interred in Woodland Cemetery where his headstone tells that he was a Private in Com-
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pany M of the Washington 64th Infantry. That stone inscription hardly does justice to a man who experienced much adventure and survived adversity

in his life. One would never suspect that the man had really lived an interesting life.

Clayton/ Deer Park Historical Society Minutes, November 13, 2010

In attendance: Grace Hubal, Pete Coffin, Bill Sebright, Mark Wagner, Sharon Clark, Warren Nord, Lorraine Nord, Bob Clouse, Mary Clouse, Don Ball, Marilyn Reilly, Betty Burdette, Penny Hutten, Jeff Lilly, Roxanne Camp, Sue Rehms, Karen Meyer, Jo Ann Borden, and Glenn Borden.

Society president, Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported that there is \$2483.70 in checking. There was \$53.25 in deposits for the month. Checks were written to Knight Construction for \$1500, and to Sharon Clark for \$360.73 for *Mortarboard* supplies.

Grace Hubal, Secretary, reported that she has a good draft of the Society cookbook. She showed everyone what she has done already. Grace also talked about getting local businesses to advertise in the cookbook to help with the cost of publishing. She also put a Society membership application in it. Grace is still accepting recipes.

Sharon Clark handed out *Mortarboard* 31. Sharon said Darryl Click, a member of her Class of 1959 until he moved away, presented her with group pictures from Grade 1 through Grade 8. She gave them to Pete to scan. Volume 8 of the *Collected Newsletters* is now on sale for \$4.

Pete Coffin, Vice President, reported that he has scanned another group of pictures from Vera Spaulding. He also sent out information to several parties requesting information about their families.

Bill reported that 43 questionnaires were mailed out. Nine chose to "Continue with the Society having no building plans." Seven

chose to "Open active, formal discussions with the LLHS about merging the 2 societies and either using a portion of their building or adding on to it." Eight chose "Actively begin a plan to purchase property and develop a building plan for a museum building to house the CDPHS." Much discussion followed.

Pete suggested that we set up a building fund with its own bank account to buy land for a museum. Betty Burdette mentioned that people are more willing to donate money if they can see what the money is going to, for example the Museum. Jeff Lilly mentioned that property is at its lowest right now. A while ago, Grace actually checked out the property in Clayton, where the original Prestini Museum once stood. However, it is not for sale. Pete mentioned we should consider renting property in Deer Park which has electric, water, sewage, etc. already in. Pete agreed to look into this. Pete discussed that a place with a larger population like Deer Park would be a better place to house a museum. Betty Burdette said there are many vacant buildings available in downtown Deer Park right now.

Bob Clouse mentioned that we should try to keep the Museum close to where our Eagle already stands. It was moved by Pete Coffin and seconded by Jeff Lilly that Bob Clouse be appointed to look into appropriate acreage for the museum near the Clayton Drive In. It was unanimous that Bob be appointed.

Discussion was held about giving the Longs money from the Society to help pay for the landscaping around the Eagle. Pete moved that we give the Longs a check for \$500, Betty
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Burdette seconded it. It passed unanimously. An annual maintenance fee was suggested for the Eagle display. We will discuss an annual maintenance fee at the next meeting. We gave Longs a check today for \$500.

A thank you card was presented to Sharon Clark for her hard work on publishing the *Mortarboard*.

There was a question about membership dues. Membership dues are due in January of 2011. They are \$20 per family.

The Heritage Network meeting is going to be at the Clayton Grange on November 15, 2010, at 9:30 AM.

Next meeting 12-11-10 at 9 AM

Meeting adjourned at 10:06 AM

Respectfully submitted by Grace Hubal,
Secretary

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: 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. Deadline for recipe submissions is December 22, 2010.

Projection date for printing cook-books is January 15, 2011, to have them on display by Winterfest.

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

WANTED. Information and photos

regarding the history of Trysil/Zion Lutheran Church.

WANTED: Any stories and photos of your family’s history in connection with their occupations and settlement in the Clayton/Deer Park Area.

Society Contacts

C/DPHS, Box 293, Clayton, WA 99110

Bill Sebright, president — (sebrightba@wildblue.net)

Peter Coffin, vice president — (pcffin@q.com)

Bob Clouse, webmaster — (ramclouse@q.com)

Sharon Clark, editor — (sharonclark@centurytel.net)

Grace Hubal, secretary — (hubals@msn.com)