



Whitman County Historical Society

Newsletter

Vol. 51, No. 6 – November/December 2024

VINTAGE HOLIDAY

at the historic

PERKINS HOUSE

623 N. Perkins Ave Colfax, WA

Saturday, December 7th

Two events, one special day!

First, from 11:00am to Noon:

An exclusive **winter fashion show**
from our historic clothing
collection. Refreshments and
limited seating at \$25 per ticket!!

Reservations required! Secure yours at:
<https://www.whitmancountyhistoricalsociety.org>



Then, from Noon to 2:00pm:

Guided tours, **live music**,
hot wassail, tasty tidbits,
and glorious decorations!
Open house, **FREE** to the public!

Train Car Holiday Bazaar, Pullman Depot Saturdays, Dec. 7, 14, and 21



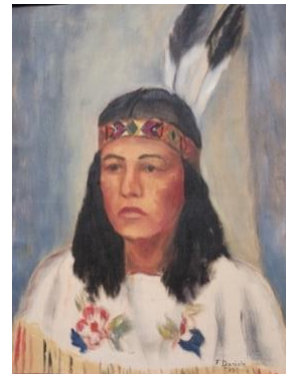
For the third year in a row, the Pullman Depot will feature a holiday bazaar in the passenger car. Visitors will be able to purchase handmade gifts, such as Christmas ornaments, artwork, candles, jewelry, quilted potholders and table runners, knitted and crocheted caps, pottery mugs and bowls, and stationery, notecards, and postcards, among other things. Come on over after the Kiwanis Pancake Feed! (See page 3.) Hours for the bazaar are 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Dec. 7, and noon to 4:00 PM on Dec. 14 and 21.

Children can play with the Depot's Polar Express electric train, and adults can appreciate an eclectic Christmas tree made of electric trains!

Native American Portraits on Display at the Pullman Depot by Dan Leonard

Twelve portraits of members of the Colville Confederated Tribes, painted by Florence Daniels Brown (1908-1997), will be on display at the Depot until further notice. They were painted as part of four two-week Washington State College summer art colonies, held in Nespelem in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The artist, my Aunt Florence, grew up on a sandhill farm in central Kansas. After earning a teaching degree from Fort Hays College, she taught art for a few years in secondary schools in Ottumwa, Iowa, then attended Columbia University, where she earned an MA in Art. It was probably there that she learned about the WSC art colonies on the Colville Reservation. In 1939 and again in 1940, Florence traveled by bus to Nespelem to attend two of them.



Students at the art colony were required to paint six portraits and two landscapes. Approximately 800 paintings were produced over four years, of which fewer than 100 are now known. With only three exceptions, they have been—until now—in the possession of either the artists or their families. They have never before been on public display.

When we visited my aunt in California in the 1980s, where she lived most of her adult life, she gave her paintings to my wife Joyce and me, expressing her desire to see them returned to Washington State, where they were painted. This exhibit begins that plan. Within a year we expect to donate them to the Colville

Tribal Museum in Coulee Dam. When we made our initial contact with the museum, one tribal artist exclaimed, “That’s my grandfather!”

Stop by the Depot on any Saturday afternoon between 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM to see these paintings, and plan to attend a program my wife Joyce and I will be presenting on them on December 12 (See page 4).

WCHS 2024 Annual Meeting

Twenty-six WCHS members attended the organization’s Annual Meeting, which was held on Sunday afternoon, October 13, at the Print Museum in Palouse. President **Mark Clinton** honored four volunteers who have served WCHS for a combined total of approximately 115 years.



First honored was *Bunchgrass Historian* editor **Ed Garretson** (Uniontown), far left, who was a founding member of WCHS in 1972 and is retiring this fall. During his 52-year volunteer career, Ed created the WCHS Archive in the Gladish Community Center in Pullman, served as a member of the Board of Directors for over 40 years, was WCHS president twice, worked tirelessly at the Print Museum in Palouse for many years, and was instrumental in WCHS’s purchase of the former Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Pullman five years ago.

Long-time WCHS members, **Greg Partch** (Garfield) and **Kathy Meyer** (Pullman), above right, were also honored for their many years of volunteer service to WCHS. Like Ed, Greg has been a member of WCHS since its earliest years. He and his wife Sheri were influential in shaping WCHS in its first decade, then took some time off from active volunteer work to raise their family. Greg returned to the board and other projects in 2011, serving as president from 2015 to 2022. He says his greatest achievement was convincing the Board to hire a paid director. Kathy, too, has been an active volunteer for many years—Ed recruited her in 1992. She was a member of the board of Board of Directors for 29 years, and served as president twice, as co-director of the Perkins House for 13 years, and as schoolmarm at the Jones Schoolhouse for 11. She is now doing volunteer work for the Pullman Depot, is co-editor of this newsletter, and writes occasional columns for a feature in the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News* called “Nearby History.”

Finally, **Allison Munch-Rotolo** (Pullman), at right, was named “Volunteer of the Year” for 2023/24. This award is traditionally given at the Perkins House Ice Cream Social every June—but its cancellation this past summer resulted in the postponement of the presentation of her award. Allison serves on several subcommittees at the Pullman Depot—including fund raising and building restoration—and she excels at grant writing. She had a leading role in the Depot’s placement on the National Historic Register.



During the business portion of the meeting, members approved the new slate of officers for 2025 and elected **Wendy Blake** of Colfax to the board. Two positions are still open. If any members are interested, contact president Mark Clinton at colfaxclintons@gmail.com.

A big thanks to **Krista Boyd** (Colfax) and **Janet Barstow** (Palouse) for organizing the meeting.

Officers, Board Members, and Project Leaders for 2025

Director: Valoree Gregory (Steptoe)

Officers:

President: **Mark Clinton** (Colfax)

Treasurer: **Jon Anderson** (Port Townsend)

Vice President: **Jeff Pietela** (LaCrosse)

Secretary: **Janet Barstow** (Palouse)

Board Members: **Wendy Blake** (Colfax)

Carol Larsen (Almota)

Pat Flansburg (Palouse)

Denise Mahnkey (Pullman)

Linda Hackbarth (Pullman)

Krista Boyd (Colfax)

Project Leaders: *Bunchgrass Historian:* **Katy Whalen** (Pullman)

Holy Trinity Chapel: **Pat Flansburg** (Palouse)

Jones Schoolhouse: **Krista Jones Boyd** (Colfax)

Lost Apple Project: **Rebecca McGee** (Pullman) and **Dave Benscoter** (Chatteroy)

Oral History: **Denise Mahnkey** (Pullman)

Perkins House: **Need Volunteer**

Pullman Depot Heritage Center: **Linda Hackbarth** (Pullman)

Building Restoration: **Kathleen Ryan** (Pullman)

Events and Education: **Jamie Whitman** (Pullman)

Fund Raising: **Debbie Sherman** (Pullman)

Rolling Stock: **John-Mark Mahnkey** (Pullman)

Roy Chatters Newspaper and Print Museum: **Janet Barstow** (Palouse)

St. Ignatius Hospital: **Austin** and **Laura Storm** (Colfax)

WCHS Archive: **Alex Otero** (Colfax)

WCHS Newsletter: **Kathy Meyer** (Pullman) and **Debbie Sherman** (Pullman)



Next Program at the Depot: “Paintings from the WSC Art Colonies at Nespelem”

by **Dan and Joyce Leonard** (Johnson)
Thursday, December 12, 7:00 PM
In the Freight Room at the Pullman Depot

(See article on page 2.)

“Fallen Cougars” Palouse People Program Rescheduled

Notice: The Annual “Fallen Cougars” program at the Depot has been permanently rescheduled from just before Veterans’ Day to just before Memorial Day, at the request of the WSU graduate students who present the program each year. Details will follow in the May/June 2025 newsletter.

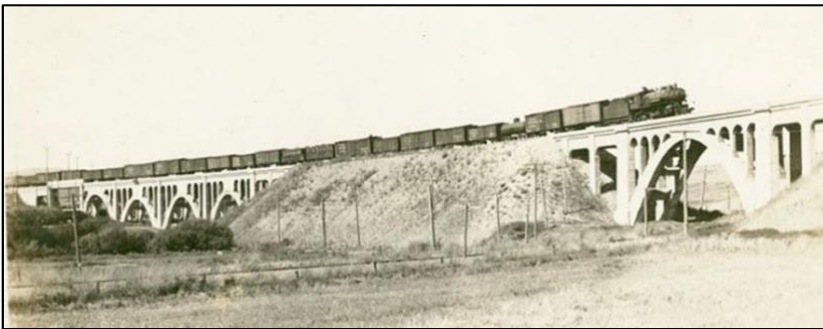
PDHC Pumpkin Wall



During the last week of October, Pullman community members created a "Pumpkin Wall" on the south side of the Depot's caboose. Approximately 140 decorated, carved, and lighted pumpkins graced temporary shelves erected by the Pullman Chamber of Commerce in an impressive show of community spirit and cooperation, led by PCC member **Bobby Ryder** and Depot volunteer **Kelly McGee**.

The Downtown Pullman Vibes Trick-or-Treat Halloween Celebration also included visits to the Depot on Saturday, Oct. 26. Over 50 adults and children in costume stopped by to see the latest exhibits and get a piece of candy.

Rosalia Bridge Day



Railroad aficionados gathered in the Rosalia Library on October 5 to enjoy a photographic history of local railroads presented by WSU Professor Emeritus **Robert G. Olsen**. Hobo quilt artwork and symbols were also displayed during the presentation. Afterward, some of the attendees participated in a

hike guided by **Mark Borleske** on the former Milwaukee Road right-of-way over the Concrete Arch Bridges that are now part of the Palouse-to-Cascades State Park Trail. The event was sponsored by the Cascade Rail Foundation, the Rosalia Library, and Thunderhawk Ranch.



Pullman Holiday Fest, Saturday, December 7



This year's Holiday Festival in Pullman will be Saturday, Dec. 7. It starts with the **Kiwanis Pancake Feed and Music Fest** at Lincoln Middle School (7:00 to 11:00 A.M.), which will feature a delicious breakfast, music, and a silent auction.

The Depot's **Train Car Bazaar** (see page 2) will run from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the passenger car at the Depot. While you're there, be sure to visit the decorated Freight Room.

The annual **Yule Jog Holiday Fun Run**, hosted by Pullman Parks and Rec, starts at 4:00 P.M., after which the **Annual Tree Lighting** will take place in Pine Street Plaza (East Main Street and SE Pine Street). Sponsored by the PCC, it will include a visit from Santa, as well as caroling, cookies, cocoa, and goodies for all the girls and boys on Santa's nice list!

Fund Raising for Coach and Caboose Restoration at the Depot Begins in November!

by Debbie Sherman, Fund Raising Chair



Have you seen the Depot's train cars lately? Their condition is rapidly deteriorating, and they urgently need our help. Plans are underway to restore the exterior of the passenger car and caboose to their original condition by removing rust, repairing metal, replacing windows, and repainting with appropriate paint. (The center photo, below, is what a restored NP passenger car should look like.) Please join us on this journey. You can donate through the Whitman County Historical Society website (<https://www.whitmancountyhistoricalsociety.org>). Click on "Donate" at the top right and scroll to "Pullman Depot Heritage Center." Specify that your donation go to the railcars in particular by calling Val at 509-553-9729. Thank you!





Dave Bencoter is the founder of the Lost Apple Project, a nonprofit organization affiliated with WCHS. Dave and his volunteers search old farms and orchards in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, looking for old varieties of apples that are believed to be extinct. At one time, there were 17,000 different varieties of apples in North America, but today there are only about 4,500. To date, Dave's group has found approximately 30 varieties, beginning with the *Fall Jeneting*, which he discovered in Colfax in 2014. His work has been featured in newspapers and magazines across the nation. Dave stepped back from his leadership role last year, turning his administrative duties over to WSU professor **Rebecca McGee**. He remains very involved, however. He and WCHS member **Linda Hackbarth** are the authors of *Lost Apples*, which was just released by Keokee Press in October.



After graduating from Pullman High School in 1973, and then from Washington State University, Dave worked as a criminal investigator for the FBI and the IRS for 24 years. He retired in 2006. He and his wife Jeannine have a blended family of 3 sons, 2 daughters, and 10 grandchildren. The couple lives in Chattaroy, Washington.

When asked why he spends so much time volunteering for the Lost Apple Project, he said, "To taste an apple you've never tasted before, a taste somebody hasn't tasted in a hundred years, it's rewarding knowing that we brought these varieties back."

Featured Museum: the Staley House

The Staley House was originally built just outside the now vanished town of Staley by pioneers Daniel and Catherine Staley. Before restoring it more than a century after its construction in 1889, owners Jack and Molly (Staley) Bencoter decided to move it two miles west across the fields after harvest to give it a more visible location and protect it from vandals. It survived relocation without incident. "It was great, not one window even cracked," said Jack in 1995. The house is now located at 102 Kirkendahl Road, two miles south of Pullman (just off Highway 195). It is open, by appointment, spring and summer. Contact **Terri Bencoter** (tbencoter@hotmail.com).



The house retains its original doors, windows, and hardware. The first floor has been returned to its appropriate Victorian décor, using furniture, portraits, and mementos saved by the Staley family over the years. Reproductions of period wallpaper cover the walls. Three bedrooms upstairs display themed collections: small farm tools, vintage clothing, and family photos, among others.

If you have information for the November/December newsletter...please call either **Debbie Sherman** (509) 334-7389 or **Kathy Meyer** (509) 432-1336, or email them at jdjsherman@msn.com or klemeyer@gmail.com. We can't print your stories unless you contact us!

2024 Calendar

November 20	WCHS Board Meeting, PDHC Freight Room, Pullman, 7:00 PM
December 7	Vintage Fashion Show, Perkins House, Colfax, 11:00 AM to noon
	Christmas Open House, Perkins House, Colfax, noon to 2:00 PM
	Holiday Fest, Pullman (see page 4 for details)
December 7, 14, 21	Train Car Holiday Bazaar, Pullman Depot (see page 2 for times)
December 12	Palus People, PDHC Freight Room, Pullman, 7:00 PM: "Portraits from the WSC Art Colonies in Nespelem," by Dan and Joyce Leonard
December 18	WCHS Board Meeting, ZOOM

Please Renew Your Membership! If you haven't done so already, please respond to the membership renewal request you may have recently received in the mail. Membership makes a wonderful Christmas present! The form can be found below, or you can renew membership on the WCHS website (whitmancountyhistoricalsociety.org). Thank you!

MEMBERSHIP: Become a part of the exciting future of Whitman County, or share its history with a friend or relative! Join, renew your membership, or give a gift membership.

- | | | | |
|--|--------|---|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership | - \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Membership. | - \$ 75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership | - \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron Membership | - \$100 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Membership. | - \$60 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership | - \$500 or more |

Name of continuing or new member, or gift recipient:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

Name of giver, if applicable: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

I'd like to make an additional donation: \$25.00 \$50.00 \$100.00 other \$ _____

Please direct my donation to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greatest Need | <input type="checkbox"/> Roy Chatters Newspaper and Printing Museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holy Trinity Chapel | <input type="checkbox"/> Pullman Depot Heritage Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perkins House and Cabin | <input type="checkbox"/> WCHS Archive |

Note that WCHS is a 501c 3. Your gift is tax deductible. Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Send to: WCHS Membership Chairman PO Box 67 COLFAX WA 99111