LCPS Membership Recognized For Historic Preservation

One of the most important recognitions given by the City is the Dr. Edward Harvey Award. This award draws public attention to property owners of historic homes and public properties who have shown their preservation values with their restoration efforts.

LCPS would like to recognize our own members, Mike and Gigi Crowley, “who brought new life to their Grand Avenue home” and received the Dr. Harvey award in the private homeowner category. And congratulations also goes to the LCPS Organization, also a winner for this year’s Dr. Harvey Award. It is our membership, as well as Board Members and volunteers, who have worked tirelessly over the past 10 years to make this cause of preservation one that has helped, according to the Daily Astorian’s editorial of June 23rd,

“...to bring the community to a consensus that we have something really special worth preserving...”

You are welcome to pick up additional LCPS brochures at our office, open Mondays from 3 - 7 PM, to pass on to your neighbors. Congratulations to all!!

Recap of 2008 Annual Meeting
Submitted by LaRee Johnson

Brett Estes, Astoria’s Community Development Director, was the featured speaker at the annual meeting of the Lower Columbia Preservation Society on April 23rd. Brett discussed the Vision for the Waterfront development, as well as his view on Historic Preservation. Brett’s presentation was an excellent opportunity to get to get acquainted with him and ask questions about historic preservation.

In addition we heard from Ryan Davis, one of the owners of the Red Building, located on the river near the Cannery Pier Hotel. Having the Loft at the Red Building as the location of our 2008 Annual Meeting was a great opportunity to learn about the restoration of this historic building. The Loft, with its “industrial feel,” is open and spacious enough for a meeting of up to 400 persons. Nice to think of our membership filling that space in a few years!

We had an overview of the past year by Gin Laughter, Certificate of Merit Awards, an election of officers, followed by light refreshments.
Recap: LCPS Members Check-In to Check-Out Commodore Hotel
Submitted by John Goodenberger

The Old House Forum held at the Commodore Hotel was a raving success. A historic structure in Astoria came to life, filled with 70 LCPS members eager to view its in-progress restoration. The record-breaking crowd was toured by owners Brian Faherty and Paul Caruana.

Members heard a brief history of the building, then settled into the nuts and bolts of the restoration. The building's transformation is remarkable. Dropped ceilings on the first floor have been removed. Transom windows, once blocked, now flood the space with light. The restoration of interior finishes will soon follow.

The upper two floors, which housed the hotel, were of particular interest. Unoccupied since 1964, the rooms were time capsules of an earlier day. Faherty and Caruana's workload increased many fold after last December's hurricane-force windstorm.

The building's roof was torn off, coming to rest in the street below. Intact rooms became water logged. Lath and plaster was not repairable. However, all of the woodwork was carefully removed, the pieces numbered, then shipped to Portland for stripping. All woodwork will be returned to its original location.

Other highlights included viewing a massive structural system in the basement, inspecting a lightwell between the hotel and its neighbor, and just imagining what it will be like to visit this old traveler's hotel when restoration is complete. Faherty and Caruana are estimating the building will be ready for occupancy by the end of the year.

John Goodenberger presents a history of the Commodore Hotel and its site.
Photo by LaRee Johnson
Recap: Plaster Repair Workshop Recap  
Rosalie McCleary, Workshop Coordinator

Christine “Cricket” Epperson and her daughter, Christy Slate, presented the April Workshop on Plaster Repair. This very informative demonstration took place in the home of Marcia Fenske, who graciously allowed everyone to go between two rooms that are being restored. More than 20 attendees were able to see actual repairs to the plaster, ask questions about the process and see the materials being used for this project. Cricket and Christy also discussed how to substitute less demanding methods and materials for plaster repair. Many of the LCPS attendees are now ready to tackle their own projects with a greater degree of confidence. Others now know they can call upon Cricket and Christy for help. Everyone felt the workshop was very informative, and we appreciate having experts share their knowledge.

The Finnish Meat Market Reborn  
Submitted by Mitch Mitchum

The historic Finnish Meat Market building at 279 West Marine Drive was in recent years the home of the Astor Street Opry Company but is now undergoing a major renovation and rebirth.

Built in 1924, the building was designed by John Wicks, a prominent Astoria architect. The building was commissioned by the founders of the Finnish Meat Market, which opened for business in 1911. This building was active in Uniontown as a market until 1950.

Tim Hurd and Nancy Montgomery, owners of the Columbia River Coffee Roasters, have purchased the building and have engaged Rickenbach Construction to restore and convert the building. The building will not only serve as a coffee roasting headquarters for the company but will also offer the ambiance of a coffee house and retail center.

Michelle Diffenbach, the architect, has paid careful attention to restoring the historic details of the building. Large clear fir ceiling beams measuring 10 by 25 inches have been exposed. New cedar arched transom windows and an authentically recreated storefront have been installed. The windows were created by Bergerson Windows of Warrenton.

When you drive by, please note the detailed terra cotta panels above the windows and the terra cotta nameplate on this building. The exterior of the building will be repainted in colors selected from a palette of period historic colors.

Kudos to Tim and Nancy who have made a large commitment to the renaissance of the Uniontown community through their dedicated restoration of The Finnish Meat Market.

LCPS Signed On!  
Submitted by John Goodenberger

LCPS wishes to thank Astoria sign maker Jeff Miller, who graciously designed and constructed a new sign board for the LCPS office. Miller, of Sign One in Seaside, has won awards in international sign competitions. We are fortunate to benefit from his time and talents. The black, white and gold leaf sign will be placed on the sidewalk during office hours. Keep your eye out for the artful sign. Kudos, Jeff, for making our office more visible!
The Willapa Bay Interpretive Center is located in Nahcotta, Washington, off Sandridge Road on 273rd Street past the Jolly Rogers Oyster Plant but before the old Bendiksen building. The street is chalky with crushed oyster shells scattered by birds and ground into gritty tale by passing cars. Hills of empty oyster shells are seen throughout the area. The small cedar shake building on the South side of the street is the museum built to honor Willapa Bay and preserve the history of those men and women who have harvested oysters from these shallow waters for nearly 150 years.

This small structure is a replica of the oyster station houses that were sprinkled across the bay to provide a workplace and shelter for crew and families. The unpainted building sits on high pilings surrounded by a deck and staircase to the mudflats. It affords a lovely view of Willapa Bay, an estuary of fresh water from eight rivers and salt water from the Pacific Ocean. The estuary is shallow and rich in nutrients, which is ideal for the growth of oysters. This amazingly quiet body of water is often still, serene, peaceful and calming. Even when she becomes fierce and the cold wind whips her into a frenzy of white caps, she is eerily quiet.

As you enter the building, your feet echo across the wood flooring high above the mud. A sash of red paint runs across the wall neatly placing the history of oyster gathering into chronological order. Native Americans skimmed across the water in canoes carved from cedar logs to collect oysters. European immigrants used shallow bottom boats powered by sail to haul oysters into port in a pointy boat towed behind. Eventually gas or diesel powered the flat-bottomed dredges used in oyster farming. Boat builders and trains came and went at the behest of the oyster business. Men and women have come to this area from Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Viet Nam and Mexico. Some were scaliwags, flim-flam men and ne’er-do-wells. Those who stayed were the hardy souls, fiercely independent and tough as the shell that surrounds the oyster.

Oyster farmers are constantly learning new and better ways to increase their harvest and protect their tidelands from the encroaching grass, pests and disease. Picking oysters from mudflats has seesawed from hand gathering in bushel baskets to the use of tongs (a hinged rake-like tool) and from a boat to dredging. Handpicking at low tide has been the most lasting method. Removing the oyster from the shell continues to be done by hand, and only after a lot of practice! Native oysters had a good run through the California Gold Rush, then dwindled. Eastern oysters were brought in as young oysters to fatten in the rich soup provided by the bay but then dwindled around the time of the Great Depression. The Pacific oyster seed was imported from Japan until World War II. Research scientists eventually discovered that a warm water temperature would trigger spawning so that species is now harvested locally.

The walls of the museum are alive with quotes from various oystermen and women, photos of trains, and menus featuring Willapa Bay oysters, along with two boats and wire bushel baskets. The largest and most appropriate space is reserved for a mural map of the Willapa Bay by Nancy Lloyd.

The Willapa Bay Interpretive Center is open from 10 am to 3 pm Friday through Sunday, and holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Sources: Shoalwater Willapa, by Douglas Allen; Willapa Bay and the Oysters, by Nancy Lloyd. Special thanks to Carole Wiegardt.
2008 Garden Tour
by Gin Laughery, Garden Tour Chair

Stunning designs paired with a beautiful day delighted the 165 ticket holders who viewed the seven gardens featured on this year’s LCPS garden tour. The longest-running garden tour event in the lower Columbia region has always drawn an appreciative crowd; perhaps even more so this year as attendees viewed gardens which having survived winter storm damage, were full of new growth and life.

The Tongue Point Job Corps Center contributed two garden sites to this year’s tour. The courtyard garden and water feature designed by Landscape Department students under the direction of Kris Saulsbury was a peaceful, well maintained green space; a sort of preamble to the four acre Diversity garden that followed which featured a beautiful grid hard scape with garden urn fountain and arbors, the beginnings of a topiary garden and designated areas for future student projects reflecting the diversity of the landscapers themselves. A weeping sequoia, Japanese maples and formal pathways added a lovely presence to this garden.

Leon and Mary Jackson’s garden was especially relevant to those gardening in a small space. The tranquil pond and beautiful plantings were graced by a charming garden cat. Stairways and landings connected areas in easy to maintain ways. The large secluded backyard of Ruth Bardy showcased mature Japanese maples, seventy year old rhododendrons, heirloom roses, a greenhouse and vegetable garden. It also contained a waterfall and pond.

Becky Graham and Kris Saulsbury’s secluded patio garden featured unusual conifers, bamboo, Japanese maples, bonsais, tropicaals and succulents as well as a peaceful stream-like water feature by the front walk. Many beautiful container plantings on the patio contributed to this talented garden designer and landscaper’s offerings.
Rosetta Hurley's garden, with its complex weavings of texture and color in the front and side beds, gave way to a peaceful green retreat as the back garden merged into the woods. Large grasses offered grace of movement and mingled with old Gallica roses. This garden with its mature plantings was in contrast to the "garden redesign" of Dian and Vity Kazlauskas. A newly poured aggregate patio offered design ideas to other gardeners seeking entertainment space. Refreshments were enjoyed by many here as we drew tickets for wonderful prizes and compared notes on favorite plants.

The grand prize — four hours of fall garden labor by the Tongue Point Job Corps Landscape students — was won by Leon and Mary Jackson.

I would like to thank the Gardeners on this year's tour for sharing their private gardens with the community. Thank you also to Pam Alegria, Dian Kazlauskas, Ann Marie, Linda Oldenkamp, Sharon Sattler and Melissa Yowell for all their efforts to make this tour so successful.

Gin Laughery, Chair, LCPS 2008 Garden Tour

All photographs by LaRee Johnson
Travel Aid Awarded To Help Attend Conferences

Oregon’s State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has awarded a total of $7,500 to help five individuals involved with historic preservation-related projects in Oregon attend conferences and workshops that offer learning opportunities in their areas of interest.

Funded through the Elisabeth Walton Potter Historic Preservation Advocacy and Education Award program, the financial aid helps applicants defray travel expenses to and from conferences and pay conference registration fees. The 2008 Potter award recipients, each receiving $1,500, are Gwendolyn Trice, Enterprise; Louise-Annette Burgess, Corvallis; Bill Pattison, Hood River; Sean O’Harra, Salem; and Stephanie Brown, Portland.

“Our goal is to provide financial assistance to persons whose applications demonstrate a tangible interest in expanding their knowledge through offerings found at various conference venues having a focus on issues pertinent to needs of the community in which these people are active,” said SHPO cultural education specialist David Bogan.

Bogan adds that the overarching benefit derived from providing conference travel expense assistance “inspires people to come back from various conferences ready to share and apply what they learned, which in turn helps all kinds of local historic preservation-related projects move forward.”

The award is named for retired SHPO National Register coordinator and Oregon historic preservation advocate Elisabeth Walton Potter. For more information about the Potter awards, contact Bogan at (503) 986-0671 or David.Bogan@state.or.us.

The above information is provided by Oregon Heritage News, a service of the Oregon Heritage Commission, which can be contacted at heritage.info@state.or.us.

Knappton Cove Summer Update
Submitted by Nancy Anderson

The Quarantine Station museum will be welcoming visitors at the Knappton Cove Heritage Center summer Saturday afternoons from 1-4 pm through Labor Day. The museum is also open by appointment (call 503-738-5206). We are proud of our beautiful new historically accurate cedar shake roof, complete with gutters and downspouts. Our next BIG challenge is raising funds to re-do the foundation of the old hospital and repair the porches.

We would like to hear from anyone who is a descendant or knows anyone who came through the Columbia River’s “Ellis Island” between 1899 and 1938. Our eventual goal is to be able to list all the names and nationalities of immigrants to this area during that time, as well as to list the names of the ships on which they arrived. An estimated 100,000 people went through the required health inspection at this port of entry, including immigrants, passengers and crew members. Any input or research to help us reach this goal would be appreciated.

The museum is located on Highway 401 in Washington state, just 2 miles upstream (east) of the Lewis & Clark National Parks “Dismal Nitch” Rest Area.
Astoria's First Post Office
Submitted by LaRee Johnson

Have you been by the special park commemorating the historic site of the First Post Office for Astoria? This narrow little park is located just behind the Rose River Inn Bed & Breakfast on 15th Street, owned by LCPS members David and Pam Armstrong.

When the Armstrongs bought the Rose River Inn, the flagpole did not have a rope and the park was untended. When the tourists from the sternwheeler moored at the Columbia River Maritime Museum were driving by in tour buses, the couple felt bad that the park did not put Astoria’s best face forward. The Armstrongs began sprucing up the park, cutting back bushes and trimming. After taking the time to make the right contacts, the Astoria Fire Department came by and strung the rope on the flagpole, and the American Legion donated a flag. David has performed the ritual flag raising every morning for the past two years.

Kudos to the Armstrongs for taking pride in their neighborhood and adding some old fashioned “community spirit” to Astoria. If you have not met them, please say hello when you see them outside tending their own lovely rose garden or raising the flag in the First Post Office Park.
From the President’s Corner

Gin Laughery

Given our current economic state with its high fuel and grocery prices, it is heartening to observe so much good restoration work going on in the lower Columbia region. Commercial properties damaged during the December storm are infused with new energy as transom windows that were covered for decades are now being restored. The meeting house at Shively Park has a new back porch and the ground cover that seemed too beat up to ever return is back with trilliums and oxalis affirming nature’s resiliency. Homes have been re-roofed and their landscapes restored and often improved. Perhaps they are not all “historic” in the traditional sense, but they are part of our area’s history. They are certainly worth keeping because they have plenty of life left in them. Saving and reusing buildings is an economically and environmentally responsible endeavor. As Dwight Young says, in his “Yes to Yesterday” article in the May/June 2008 Preservation publication, “When you strip away all the jargon and rhetoric, historic preservation is simply having the good sense to hang on to something—a building or a neighborhood or a piece of landscape—because it’s important to us as individuals and/or as a nation.” We are so very fortunate to live in a beautiful area where sense of place is highly valued and LCPS is honored to be part of the process. Thank you for your ongoing membership and commitment.