

Docents Newsletter

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Historical Society of Dayton Valley

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Docents program

By Ruby McFarland

“Don't compromise yourself, you are all you've got.” Janis Joplin 1943-1970

Now you are wondering why I'm quoting Janis Joplin. She certainly would not be a person I'd want my children to emulate. In the old days of my youth, I ran with the same crowd of ersatz hippies, the pseudo-intellectual group of people. Janis was never completely with the program because of her lifestyle, but you could say she was true to herself and she passed away at a very young age. She ended up being a part of history. I should be so lucky. I hope I don't end up with folks saying “Ruby who?” I'm leading up to a lecture about doing your part in keeping history alive. If all the people who claim to be docents would sign up for one 3-hour sit they would only have to sit about once every month and a half. Not too much to ask to keep Dayton history alive and well.

We don't want to be another Fernley whose society died from lack of interest. In the old days of my sitting, I was all we had. I was there every weekend. I wanted the public to know you could depend on the doors being open. You can't run a business if your doors are open sometimes. You can't compromise, and history is our business. Let's try to lend a hand to keep the doors open. The three or four people who do respond would like to do more about their own weekends. They are constantly asked to sit because of lack of interest of other people in the society. You don't have to be a docent to sit the museum. We will see to getting you in the building and help if you need answers. Please help to keep the museum alive and

well. Our reputation of being informative and there is at stake. Thank you for what you do; let's try to do more.

Docent doings

By Patrick Neylan

Winter seems to be finally coming to an end but one of our “winter” projects is just getting into full swing. We have finally, with some trepidation, approached the daunting task of accessioning the contents of the JohnD barn. This is the prerequisite step to setting up the new displays that will be featured in the barn. Most of the items are from Stony Tennant's lifelong collection of Dayton tools and equipment. No one, not even Stony, knows how many items are waiting to be accessioned. A dedicated crew has already completed four sessions of several hours each and built a detailed inventory, including individual photos of 250 items from the barn. We now have a neat orderly pile of items sitting in an endless sea of other tools and implements! This is truly a project that takes a “village” to pull off. Nothing happens until Stony identifies an item and what exactly it does, is used for, where it came from and a hundred other things. Then two others have to write up the information, one on the accession log and the other on the individual identification tag now attached to each and every implement. Moving from that table it goes on to the photographer for a picture that includes a slate with the exact accession number noted so that the two will forever be matched and quickly identifiable, including its location in the museum “system” that we now have. A photo

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Number is then assigned to correlate with the accession number and so on. This is a monumental task. We knew it would be, but frankly I think all involved are actually having some fun at the same time. I know it is educational. I had never known about a “chicken manure diluter,” or that one ever existed, but we have one. Now, everyone in Dayton can come to us and see one! No more turning away the “diluter” enthusiast!

The main reason for writing this is to say “Thank You!” Thank you to all who have helped. Each session has had different members helping. Everyone has been involved with more than one stage of the operation; some on the camera, some on the computer, some writing their fingers off. Everyone has donated as much time as their already busy schedules would allow. A fair cross section of the society has taken the time to help and the results are starting to add up. The greatest asset of the society is still its members!

Final notes

By Bob Wallace

One of the issues for your editor this winter period is that we're nowhere near Dayton to help out with the various chores necessary to be performed around the museum as it's readied for another season of welcoming visitors to Dayton's historic museum. On the other hand, it whets our appetite for seeing as quickly as possible the changes made at the museum in our absence. We'll be back at the end of April, ready to visit the museum and see what's been taking place during our absence.

Since hitting the road early last October, we've been as far north as Olympia, Washington, then back along I-5 and US 101 to San Diego county before heading east to Yuma and Phoenix where we're hanging out at the moment. This issue is coming your way a few days earlier than is the norm, due to a ten-day vacation trip coming up at the time we'd normally be putting the newsletter together. Our thanks to Ruby and Pat for writing

their monthly columns in a timely manner to make this work out for everyone.

Being away from Dayton does not mean we're away from museums. Nearly every stop we've made since early last October has had a museum of some sort within driving distance of our stops, whether those were only a day or two, or those involving up to a week in one location. Museums can be found in lots of locations around the country, many of them in smaller communities looking very much like our Dayton School House Museum, filled with items related to that local area, others in larger cities having lots more floor space and different perspective on what they will want to display on their walls or floors.

For those museums with connections in one way or another to railroads, it's a curiosity about how what they've done with their displays might be useful for us in Dayton at both the museum and eventually with the depot which, one of these days, will look like a depot as it did in 1881 when completed by the Carson & Colorado Railroad. In some instances, the museum located in a former rail depot was still in its original location or had been moved a short distance away from its site but still adjacent to the tracks with trains going by at all times of the day. Other depots were removed some distance away or been built in a location adjacent to working tracks but never a working depot. One of the latter is located in Chandler, Arizona, southeast of downtown Phoenix, with the U.P.'s Phoenix Subdivision running next to their site and includes a large collection of former railroad equipment.

We in Dayton now have “our” narrow gauge box car, would enjoy having a narrow gauge steam engine to accompany that box car, but those old steamers are few and far between, most likely spoken for and already at a spot from which they'll never move. But, if we could find such an engine, what might the young kids of today think of that if we were able to make the whistle and bell work on days when the depot would be open for an event?