If This Building Could Talk…

It was becoming increasingly clear by the 1990’s that I could no longer adequately serve the growing needs of city government. In 1999 the City moved their offices to new digs up the hill. I then became dedicated to serving our first responders and did my best to house the Police Department for 15 years. But sadly, in 2014, my bones’ seismic limitations did not meet Police needs, so the Department moved into new housing in the Willamette Neighborhood.

For the last eight years, I have basically been mothballed and aging like a beloved grandparent. The only person I get to interact with is my Parks & Recreation caretaker, Jeremiah Kirk. Fortunately, some farsighted folk recognized in 2016 that I still had much to offer if I was properly preserved. John Klatt discovered that while my bones were not adequate to house the police, I do have iron in my bricks, which meant that no seismic reinforcement was needed to maintain my health for public use.

(continued on page 2)

After last issue’s update on West Linn Historic City Hall, Jim Mattis obtained a rather clever ‘interview’ with the building. According to Jim, here is what the building said…

Lend me your ear as these walls are going to talk!

I was built in 1936 during the Great Depression, thanks mostly to funding by FDR’s Works Progress Administration, and was West Linn’s first permanent City Hall. My flexible, rather frugal design resulted in restrained frills and gave me a ‘boxy’ appearance. It was the Depression, after all, and I needed to be judiciously economical. Being flexible meant I served many masters, including a grocery store and meat market; the Post Office; and the library, in addition to city offices. As I approach my ninth decade, I may soon return to my multi-tasking roots. But I am getting ahead of myself – you need to know some other things about me.

By the early 1960s, I had lost some of my commercial friends, but I continued to serve most of the city’s needs. However, the construction of Interstate 205 in the late 1960’s destroyed many of my neighbors and any hope of building a true city center with me at its heart.

This fascinating view of the building circa 1930 was when it housed Columbia Food and the Post Office.

(continued on page 2)

(photo courtesy of Willamette Falls Paper Co.)
Reflections

After decades of heritage advocacy at Willamette Falls, we are reflecting on what our mission is moving forward.

Preserving our heritage at the Great Falls of the Willamette is powerful as we consider the present and the future. The spirit of human endeavor at this special place from time immemorial to the first industrial complex in the Pacific Northwest in the mid-1800s, to the present is inspiring and sometimes amazing. We will use our reflections to continue to preserve our powerful past.

Stay tuned for more updates as we move into our next chapter. Thank you for your continued support. Without your help, our efforts are challenged.

Troy Bowers
President WFHF
150th Years Young Celebration!
Willamette Falls Locks 1873-2023

By Sandy Carter
WFHF Board and Locks Authority member

On January 21st the Foundation hosted a very successful 150th birthday party for the Locks at the West Linn Library. Attended by 75 supporters, the happy and historic gathering revitalized community interest in Foundation advocacy. Tribal, State, Regional, County and City partners were serenaded in the lobby by Jerry Herrmann’s barbershop quartet.

Many thanks are due event co-sponsors Willamette Falls Locks Authority, Portland General Electric, and the Willamette Falls & Landings Heritage Area Coalition, as well as to Bolton Starbucks, West Linn Market of Choice, and the City of West Linn, which printed the banner.

The photo picture frame display was courtesy of the Portland District Corps of Engineers, and the wonderful Shutterfly photo-book showing 20 years of people in and at the locks was the product of collaboration between Carter and skilled West Linn graphics volunteer Rachel Tillman.

Board volunteers who helped make the event a success were Jim Mattis, Dan Butler, Alma Coston, Betty Folmsbee, David Taylor, Jeff Jones, Jim Stallcup and Jim Edwards. Russ Axelrod and Jody Carson saved the day on New Year’s Eve by assisting in the hanging of the images. Metro Councilor Christine Lewis spoke of the future transfer of ownership and stewardship of the canal to the Locks Authority.

Thanks to Office Depot for deeply discounted printing services and to Library Staff for booking the exhibit for its January slot. And huge recognition goes to Diane Harju, who stepped in to manage party arrangements when Carter had to step back temporarily for health reasons.

Library staff reported that during its month in the Community Room the Locks display attracted many members of the public who came to the library specifically to see it. The exhibit and event were curated and planned by Carter, who is now looking for other appropriate venues in which to share all or part of the 30 featured images in public spaces around the Falls.

For information on this partnering opportunity, contact Carter at sandy.carter@wordscount.biz.

The Locks Authority is Recruiting

The Authority is actively interviewing candidates for the Executive Director position. A job description is posted by PSU’s Regional Solutions’/ Office of Community Consensus.

Interested parties can contact Turner O’Dell at todell@pdx.edu. Separately, the Authority would welcome inquiries from individuals with experience and involvement in marine-related industries/ river-based commercial ventures about joining the Authority.

Please contact O’Dell or Sandy Carter (Locks Authority Sec./Treas.) for information on the application process. Successful applicants are appointed by the Governor.
LADY B: Still Waiting for a Home

The Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation continues to explore options as we search for a place to store the former Bernert Towing tugboat LADY B.

Wilsonville Concrete offered to donate the 40-foot, 1947-built steel-hulled tug so that it could be preserved and eventually displayed for public viewing.

Ideally, the boat would be located somewhere along the banks of the Willamette where it worked for so many years. Unfortunately most suitable locations are owned by PGE or occupied by Willamette Falls Paper Co. where even temporary space is not currently unavailable.

WFHF project leader Jim Edwards has been in discussion with local municipalities about potential park sites but this will be a lengthy and challenging process.

If a proper site can not be found the historic vessel will be scrapped. Let’s hope not!

An undated and unknown newspaper photo of a Bernert tug working below The Falls.

Like the LADY B, the tugs BILLY and LINCOLN, were similar to the many small boats that once worked the log rafts above and below The Falls.

The Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation depends on the support of people like you to drive our mission!

Help WFHF Keep History Alive: Donate Now!

The Willamette Falls Heritage Foundation is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization. Please send your tax deductible contributions to the address at right!