

KIRKMAN HOUSE MUSEUM

SUMMER, 2014



Tying the Knot

120 Years of Walla Walla Weddings

SWEET HOME WALLA WALLA • HANDS ON HISTORY • REMEMBERING MARY KOCH



Issue 2, 2014

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Here Come the Brides

From churches to bicycles to softball mounds

No one knows how many couples have wed in Walla Walla since 1890 but the museum's summer exhibit **Tying the Knot: 120 years of Walla Walla Weddings** showcases the wide variety of ways marriages have been celebrated.

"The diversity of the wedding gowns is surprising," said Carolyn Priest, co-curator of the exhibit, "Some are all frills and lace, others are sleekly simple and elegant. Each one tells you a lot about the bride who wore it and how she wanted to present herself."

Walla Walla's Italian and Hispanic communities are well-represented in the exhibit with a number of beautiful and stylish gowns.

"Then we have wedding costumes that are absolutely unique," said Susan Monahan, the exhibit's other curator. "My favorite is that of a young woman who was married during a baseball

game on the pitcher's mound. She was married in her uniform. Another unique wedding occurred at the beginning of a bicycle race. We produced a video about these weddings along with some other one-of-a-kind ceremonies. They all display great combinations of love, imagination and courage," she said.

Over 30 wedding gowns, trousseaus, and other wedding artifacts are on display. Three video stations present stories of local weddings and wedding customs over time.

The exhibit opened on Wednesday, June 4 and will run through Monday, September 1. The exhibit opening was preceded by a reception for members on Tuesday, June 3.

"We had so much fun," said Pam Myers. "A scrumptious wedding cake was shared with our guests and the museum looked absolutely beautiful."



Sweet Home Walla Walla a Hit

Attendance increases 60%

Over 160 guests joined the home tour this year and enjoyed residences owned by Shawna and David Corbett, Christy and Ormand Hilderbrand, Diane and Ty McEuen, Coralee Mackey and Michael Wilcsek, Laura and Erik Jensen, and Steve Wilen.

"It was a perfect day for the tour," said Travis Martin, Sweet

Home committee chair. "People loved having the event on the day before Mother's Day and the houses were exquisite."

The event's energetic promotion produced a 60% increase in attendance from last year. "It would be great to have 500 people attend our tour but this was a big step in the right

direction," said Martin.

A new feature this year was the production of a hardcover book commemorating the homes of the tour. This 26-page full-color book is available for purchase from the museum's website.

The tour was co-sponsored by the Sustainable Living Center.

Hope in Hard Times Moves on to Spokane

Concludes a successful run at Kirkman House

The museum's first exhibit this year, **Hope in Hard Times**, ran from January 17 to April 6. Developed for Humanities Washington by the Washington Historical Society, the exhibit examined life in Walla Walla and Washington State during the Great Depression. Additions to the local exhibit were curated by Susan Monahan and Carolyn Priest.

Kirkman House was chosen as one of eight venues for this exhibit. After closing here, the exhibit

traveled to the North Spokane Library District for presentation.

"It was an extraordinary exhibit," said Priest "and one to which we added many Walla Walla depression-era artifacts. Susan Monahan created some terrific videos on life in Walla Walla during the 30s. A video of the Walla Walla flood in 1931 was very popular."

"Normally the museum is closed in the winter," said Monahan. "This exhibit helped us attract visitors during what is usually down time

for us. **Hope in Hard Times** was the cover story for both the Union Bulletin's *Marquee* and the Tri-City Herald's *AtomicTown*. Annie Charnley Eveland (*Marquee*) and Dori O'Neal (*AtomicTown*) wrote terrific articles about the exhibit."

Over 300 guests visited the museum during the exhibit's run.

"It will be a hard act to follow," remarked Priest, "but I think we'll be able to do it. Moving from the Depression to weddings is a very happy progression."



Remembering Mary

A pioneer of historic preservation

Former museum president and long-time board member, Mary Koch, passed away on May 19, 2014 at the age of 96. She served on the board from 1980 through 1990 and was its president in 1988 and 1989. Before joining the museum's board, she was a director of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.

Mary was a tireless advocate for historic preservation. She succeeded in stopping a proposed demolition of Whitman College's Conservatory of Music and influenced the restoration of many other local buildings.

A 1983 Union Bulletin article described a class she taught at Whitman College's Interim on local architecture and historic preservation. The photo at the left accompanied that article.

"I'm not a historian," she said in the article. "I'm a history lover. The only reason I'm qualified to give the lecture is I love the place."

Mary worked closely with Erma Jo Bergevin, Peggy Hoyt, Helen King, Bernice "Bunny" Stevens and other early directors of Historical Architecture Development.

"Mary, Jo, Peggy and Bunny were powerful forces," said Tim Copeland, a founding HAD director. "They stopped a lot of wrecking balls, got many buildings in the National Register, and helped teach the community about the value of our historic architecture. The downtown and Whitman College wouldn't look like they do today without their vision and leadership."

A celebration of Mary's life will be held at her home in late June.



Campers Coming to Kirkman House

Over 300 children to visit this summer

Hands on History is one of the museum's most popular educational programs for children. Now in its seventh year, this program teaches children what Victorian life was like through games, crafts, music and even an archeological dig.

This year, **Hands on History** spans six days. About 50 Campfire kids will attend each of the first three sessions. A similar number of children from the Farm Labor Camp will attend three more days. Sessions will begin in late June and run through mid-August.

"We're really looking forward to having these 300 children visit us," said Mona Geidl, museum president and the coordinator of this program. "The kids have a ball at **Hands on History** and this year will be even better. Having the BurkeMobile here will really be fun for the children."

The BurkeMobile is a special

traveling program of the Burke Museum, a natural and cultural history museum of the University of Washington. It sends Burke educators and real museum objects across the state, where students participate in hands-on investigations of their natural and cultural heritage. The BurkeMobile will bring Native American

objects, real fossils, mammal skulls, and museum-prepared birds to Kirkman House on June 26 and 27.

Funding for **Hands on History** has been provided, in part, by the Stubblefield Estate, the Mary Garner Esary Trust, the Clara and Art Bald Trust and the Yancey P. Winans Trust.

Schedule of Events - 2014

June 4

Tying the Knot exhibit opens

July and August

Hands on History for Campfire and Walla Walla Labor Camp children

September 1

Tying the Knot exhibit closes

October 3

Celebration of Forty Years
Honoring all former board members.

October 4

Sheep to Shawl fall festival

November 8

Whispered Memories psychic fair

December 4 and 5

Holiday Bazaar

December 6

Christmas Jubilee

At Fort Walla Walla now

Civil War exhibit

Major Push to Promote Museum

An ongoing frustration for many years is that Kirkman House is not well known to tourists. Here for wine tasting, dining and shopping, most visitors aren't aware of our museum or what we offer.

This March, the marketing committee met with Ron Peck, executive director of Tourism Walla Walla, and digested its survey of Walla Walla visitors. It was an in-depth look at who visits Walla Walla, when, why and what they do here. In a nutshell, the prototypical visitor is a 50-plus woman from Seattle or Portland, drives here with friends, stays in hotels and motels, drinks and buys wine, dines out and shops. On the list of things to do, visiting museums, athletic events and entertainment venues ranks low.

To heighten visitor awareness of the museum, the marketing committee created a brochure spanning the museum's events during this summer. Five thousand brochures will be channeled to

selected local hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, downtown wineries and shopping venues. The brochure consumption in each venue will be tracked from June through August. In early September, the brochure distribution record will be reviewed, as will that quarter's museum attendance compared to the same period last year.

"If our marketing efforts

create positive results," said Tim Copeland, marketing committee chair, "we may want to invite other history and arts groups in the region to join us in a joint promotional publication. We'll take a hard look at that this fall."

The brochure has been mailed to all museum members and will be widely available throughout the community from early June through late August.

KIRKMAN HOUSE MUSEUM



SPRING & SUMMER 2014



Victrola Anyone?

The Victor Talking Machine Company made Victrola phonographs from 1901 until 1929. It was a successor to the Gramophone and dominated phonograph sales for 20 years.

If you own or know of a Victrola that we might acquire, we would love to discuss this opportunity with you. The Kirkmans likely had this type of phonograph while they lived in Kirkman House. The museum's living room would be a wonderful place to feature another Victrola again.



Kirkman House Airship Alliance Takes Flight

Rick Tuttle and his hearty band of Steampunk enthusiasts served as hosts and ushers at the Gesa Power House Theater's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* on April 18. Joining Tuttle were KT Sharkey, Patti Tuttle, Celia Martin and Thomas Thompson.

"The audience really enjoyed our Steampunk outfits," said Tuttle, "and they fit right in to the play's Victorian theme. When the play ended, the cast asked us to join them on stage for a photo. That was pretty neat."

Looking Up

New medallion graces kitchen

Among the museum's architectural treasures are the plaster or fiberglass medallions that surround many of the suspended ceiling lights. Most of the main rooms have ceiling medallions and all are painted white.

"In old pictures of the house, you can see that the medallions were painted to highlight their intricate moldings," said Rick Tuttle, immediate past president. "In later years, the medallions were painted to match their ceilings. That made the detail pretty much vanish."

Rick recruited KT Sharkey to help him with the restoration of one medallion. KT was an Americorps volunteer at the museum in 2012-13 and now manages Fort Walla Walla Museum's store. They researched the medallions paintings from old photos and saw the intricacies of



the decoration.

"We tried to figure out the colors that were used but that was hard to do from black and white photos," said Tuttle. "So we just chose colors that were in the room and knew that each medallion would be different."

One medallion has been painted

and affixed to the ceiling of the historic kitchen.

"We're going to see how we like the medallion in there for a while," said Tuttle "and then address the others. The ceiling pieces in the parlor and dining room are next on our list. They should be beautiful when they are finished."



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Happy 40th Birthday

On May 21, 1974, the Historical Architecture Development corporation was formed. Founding board members were Erma Jo Bergevin, Peggy Hoyt, Helen King, Bernice Stevens, Tim Copeland, Whitney Ellis, and W. L. Minnick.

Originated as a promoter of historic preservation, HAD helped increase the community's understanding of the value of its unique architecture. The organization played a strong role in the design and development of what is now the Land Title building, and preserving many other architectural treasures.

HAD purchased the Kirkman House on May 3, 1977 and began its conversion from an apartment house to a museum.

Though its mission changed substantially when the house was purchased, the organization retained its original name until 2013 when it changed to Kirkman House Museum,

A reception to celebrate our 40th year, and to honor more than 160 individuals who have served as directors of the corporation and museum, will be held on Friday, October 3. The *Sheep to Shawl* family festival will occur on the following day.