Connecting generations through gathering, preserving, and sharing Mid-Willamette Valley history

2023 Annual Report

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WILLAMETTE HERITAGE CENTER
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Salem, OR
2023 Board of Directors

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Outgoing Staff & Support

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Josh Henderson
Karin Holton
Shayla Young
Virgil Thorpe

Mission
WHC connects generations through gathering, preserving, and sharing Mid-Willamette Valley history.

Vision
We are a place for all to discover, engage and make history.

Values

Integrity
• Adhere to preservation standards
• Pursue high standards of scholarship
• Responsibly utilize and manage resources

Inclusion
• Engage with diverse communities
• Provide educational opportunities to all abilities and ages
• Actively work to eliminate barriers to access our resources

Inspiration
• Seek out and be responsive to our community
• Share our spaces and collections to foster empathy and critical thinking
• Collaborate and encourage community engagement
Tours
Before Oregon Statehood (formerly Pioneer World) was the most popular experience requested by school-age groups.
• 1,691 students and 537 adult chaperones joined us for on-site field trips.
• 283 visitors scheduled tour groups.

Adult Classes
We host adult classes and workshops throughout the year in partnership with OSU, Salem Fiberarts Guild and Millrace Woodcrafts.
• 4 adults registered for woodworking.
• 18 adults registered for weaving.
• 6 adults registered for canning workshops.

Grants
With the assistance of funding from a Marion Cultural Development Corporation grant, we were able to hire a part-time education department intern.
• Marion Cultural Development Corporation Grant: $4,500.

Events
The Education Department continues to plan and support several events throughout the year.
• 30 people registered for Zooming Back to History.
• 16 visitors for Low-Sensory Day.
• 108 visitors for Spring Break Family Day.
• 46 visitors for Jr Archaeology Day.
• 150 visitors for Archaeology Open House.

Signature Events
WHC engaged with 6,779 community members at our 2023 Signature Events.

1,200 visitors attended Sheep to Shawl in May.
1,550 visitors attended Drive-Thru Trick-or-Treat in October
4,029 attended Magic at the Mill in December.
Finding Salem’s Chinatown(s) concluded its run. The exhibit featured the history of Salem’s Chinese American community and promoted several community projects. It will continue to live on via an article on the new Salem History Hub.

We joined forces with nine museums, archives, and other community organizations to put on the Heritage Invitational Exhibit: To Your Health!, which explored a variety of stories of public health in our community. Examples included Emily Loveridge’s nursing program at Linfield University to the day-to-day operations of the Oregon State Tuberculosis Hospital.

In partnership with the Salem Fiberarts Guild and the Weaving Guilds of Oregon, we were the last stop for the statewide juried textile exhibit Filaments, which showcased the work of weavers across Oregon.

2023 brought a lot of work on our Permanent Exhibits. We started our Warp Speed Ahead project in January, re-warping our demonstration loom. Progress has included refurbishing our 1919 Spooler and setting up our creel. Work will continue next year. Follow along at: https://www.willametteheritage.org/thomas-kay-woolen-mill/warp/

The accessible ramp around Caboose 507 is taking shape with the addition of a concrete ramp and wooden supports.

Through a grant from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, we were able to research and create our first Backpack Buddies curriculum as a pilot project. The project pairs families visiting the museum with a themed activity backpack to explore themes of the museum’s story more closely and in a more hands on manner!

New Acquisitions and Highlights

Leslie Junior High School photo, 1936-37.

Plaque from dedication of Detroit Dam, presented to Secretary of Interior Douglas McKay who pushed the button to start the turbines, 10 June 1953. WHC 2023.053.0001

Cropped image of Leland and Leonard Williams. WHC 2023.033.0005

Soap Box Derby materials, 1957, Al Pfeifer director. WHC 2023.053.0001
By the Numbers:

- **61 donations** of new material were accepted into the museum's collections, including over 4122 items.
- **1562 items** were newly cataloged last year! This includes new donations and materials that have never been cataloged before.
- **2038 items** were inventoried and rehoused by staff and volunteers.

In our collections management database we have cataloged:

- **55,073 Photographs**
- **24,486 Artifacts**
- **8,763 Books**
- **4,759 Series of Archival Records**

Milestones:

We conducted a second season of archaeological investigation on the northwest corner of our site, seeking out the original foundations of the Parsonage. Volunteers and partners from the City of Salem, Willamette University, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and the Oregon Archaeological Society completed the work.

We partnered with Oregon Black Pioneers in their Black History Quest presentation series. Together, we also developed a Juneteenth Community History Walking tour focusing on the family of Albert and Mary Ann Bayless. Over 150 people attended!

This summer, the south side of Thomas Kay Woolen Mill got a bit of a facelift as Maintenance Lead Chris Coila worked to address paint failure on the decorative cornice and probed and inventoried windows to get a better sense of how they are holding up under our Oregon weather!

Research Services

The WHC Research Library and Archives provides service remotely and by appointment. Staff and volunteers spent 779 hours providing reference support to help people connect with their history. We continue to digitize and add materials to the research portion of our website to support continued scholarship.

2023 Research Requests by Type

- In Person Visitors
- Phone Requests
- Email Requests
- Web/Social Media
- Mail Requests
- Staff Requests

Thomas Kay Woolen Mill Worker Project

This year, we marked our site's 250th entry of millworker profiles. Check them out at: https://www.willametteheritage.org/tkwm_employees
Facilities Updates

Ensuring our museum is ready for the future by maintaining our historic site.

Caboose work continued with concrete ramp pour and wooden ramp construction.

With the help of Navy Sailors from Navy Week 101 we were able to rebuild the southside of the Machine Shop.

The City of Salem grant allowed us to clean out, repair and repaint south side of Mill Building gutters.

Jason Lee porch was repaired ensuring our guests safety.

Installed a doorbell at the main entrance to let front desk know when a visitor needs assistance.

Repaved and repaired 3 sections of walkways on grounds ensuring guests have a smooth path to travel.

We installed a new phone system across the site to upgrade technology and ensure all areas have consistent telephone access.

Upgraded elevator components to provide consistent use of the elevator for visitors and venue clients.

Recruited more volunteers to assist with daily grounds and facility maintenance and support.

Event Rentals

Helping our community make history on a daily basis.

We provided event venue rental space for 329 events this year, serving close to 30,000 people.

50% were nonprofit, government, or school groups.

Community members hold events like: weddings, birthday parties, business meetings, celebrations of life, anniversary parties, fundraisers, cultural celebrations, and art shows.

Photo Credit: Brynn M Photography, Soup Meet Soul, Simply Joyful Cookies, Happy Heart Art Co, Oregon Elevated Events, Taylored To You.
This year, WHC Board of Directors invested reserve funds to manage unanticipated and postponed repairs to our infrastructure and assets. Leadership believes we are in a position to utilize resources from previous surplus years to invest in programs and preservation issues to see financial payback in the coming years.

January 1, 2023 Cash on Hand: $364,164

As we head into a year focused on preservation, we utilized past funds to begin addressing repairs in 2023.

2023 Grant Funders:
City of Salem
Marion Cultural Development Corporation
OR Health Authority
OR Parks & Recreation Department
OR State Capitol Foundation
Salem Public Library Foundation
The Kinsman Foundation
The Oregon Community Foundation

2023 Sponsors:
Ed Austin Associates
First Interstate Bank
Grove, Mueller, and Swank PC
Kraft Custom Construction, Inc
MAPS Credit Union Foundation
OR Department of Agriculture
Salem Fiberarts Guild
Salem Leadership Foundation
The H Group, Inc
Danner & Soli Event Rental & Design
Select Impressions
A Covered Affair
Santiam Brewing

Members:
As of December 2023, WHC had 412 members.

Thank you for supporting us!

December 31, 2023 Cash on Hand: $215,861

Judy Walker, Ila McCallum, Jean Cocklereas, and Pete McCallum at the We are Family Spring Gala 2023
Volunteers

As we reflect on the past year, we are excited to share the incredible journey we’ve had with our dedicated volunteers. Their unwavering commitment and passion have truly set the stage for the success and impact we’ve achieved together.

Celebrating Success Together
In 2023, our volunteers played a pivotal role in achieving remarkable milestones, from site preservation, administration, demonstrations, historic research, education, and WHC Signature Events. Their commitment to excellence has propelled us toward greater heights.

We extend our deepest gratitude to each volunteer who has been the driving force behind our success. Your tireless efforts and selflessness have made WHC a stronger, more compassionate community.

Together, our volunteers contributed an astounding 10,020 hours of their valuable time, making a profound difference in the lives of those we serve.

Opportunities for Growth
As we look to the future, exciting opportunities await. Together, we will embark on projects such as opening the Caboose exhibit and extending our outreach that will further enrich our community.

2024 Highlights

March
Changing Exhibit Opening: The PNW Community Coral Reef Project, Spring Break Low Sensory Day & Spring Break Family Day

April
Spring Gala, Saving Atlantis (documentary screening)

May
Sheep to Shawl

June
In Freedom’s Footsteps: Juneteenth Community History Walk

August
Changing Exhibit Opening: History in the Rubble: Salem’s Lost Buildings

October
Drive-Thru Trick-or-Treat

December
Magic at the Mill

WHC events support our mission of connecting generations through gathering, preserving, and sharing Mid-Willamette Valley history.

Follow us to stay up-to-date on event details and volunteer opportunities.