More Dreams Coming True for the Ivinson Mansion Museum Complex

Laramie Plains Museum
Summer
2018
A VISION HAS COME TO PASS and IT’S IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF THE MUSEUM IS PALPABLE…

Trusting brides-to-be and skeptical mothers had been making plans for over a year. After all, the Laramie Plains Museum rental coordinator and executive director did tell them that the Alice Hardie Stevens Reception Center would be expanded and renovated in time for their 2018 May through September weddings. By January they were nervous, checking in, wondering how things were coming. Luke Sweckard’s crews kept at it; the LPM volunteers and team leaders kept plugging away, Mary and Crystal kept soothing feelings and inspiring confidence that all would be well. And it was! The volunteers worked into the wee hours as deadlines approached, Luke and his men were here early and for 10-hour days, and it was down to the wire for painting the last retrofitted fire suppression pipe and cleaning the last of the dust off the kitchen dishes and washing the incredible amount of new windows, but WE MADE IT! Even after rezoning from residential to downtown commercial had us delayed for re-permitting, WE MADE IT! Though we missed being able to have occupancy by graduation weekend, we did make our first wedding on May 18th and are now heading into our full summer of weddings, receptions, and events. Brides and moms agree: It was worth the wait!

SEVEN THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT THE BEAUTIFULLY EXPANDED ALICE HARDIE STEVENS CENTER

1) Fire code allows the new facility to hold 266 guests with tables and chairs and up to 400 people milling around or in theatre seating. 94 guests were possible before.

2) Thanks to an extraordinary current donor and the wise investment of the bequest from an earlier donor, no loans were taken for this $1.5 million project done to fruition. This expansion is much more than simply a fancy update and more room: the income stream from this expanded use will help to provide for the operation of Laramie’s beloved historic house museum far into the future.

3) We are still gathering dollars to complete the stage, dressing rooms and basement archival storage spaces. You can still be part of this dream!

4) This building was originally built in 1924 as extra dormitory space, gymnasium and theatre for the Girls School that was held at the Ivinson property from 1921 to 1957. We saved the original oak stage flooring to repurpose as wainscoting, door fronts for the lower stage and kitchen pass-through, and frames to showcase photographs of the girls at the school throughout the decades. Don’t miss viewing the memory wall of these pictures later this summer. It is a nod of respect to the history of this very special building that has long helped to support the Museum.

5) The building was named Virginia Cottage when it was first built in recognition of the daughter of the donor who funded that 1924 project. Her story hangs in the bridal room hallway.

6) The building was renamed Alice Hardie Stevens Center after the vibrant woman who, as a primary member of Laramie’s newly formed Laramie Plains Museum Association, led the efforts to save the about-to-be-sold and destroyed “old Ivinson Mansion.”

7) The addition of all components of fire suppression—retrofitted to the established building and throughout the new addition—was the one major stall with moving forward as timely as we wanted. This necessary protection system added close to $350,000 in costs not originally planned—not only the sprinkler system and alarms, but the dedicated new, independent lines for electricity and phones, as well as new lines of City sewer and water coming in from 6th street. It is a major umbrella of protection for our beloved museum and the increased number of patrons able to use the venue.

Throughout this issue you can see more views of the amazing transformation, but don’t hesitate to stop by to check it out for yourself. We’re open every day but Monday each summer!
In 1862 the Pacific Railroad Act gave the Union Pacific Railroad alternating sections of land 10 miles either side of the path of the railroad as it was constructed toward the western United States. As early as 1864 UPRR railroad survey crews were scouting potential rail lines on the Laramie Plains.

In the summer of 1866 the U.S. military ordered the construction of Fort Buford about 3 miles south of where the center of Laramie now stands. The general war was chosen by General Grenville Dodge who was commander of the Army’s Department of the Missouri. Soon the name was changed to Fort Sanders (as there was already a Fort Buford in what is now North Dakota) and the location occupied by the U.S. Army.

After Fort Sanders on the Laramie Plains was established, it was unclear exactly what size the surrounding military reservation was to be. A University of Wyoming master’s thesis written by Ray Revere in 1960 noted there were statements by Army officials that the reservation was anywhere from 2 miles square (4 square miles) to 9 miles square (81 square miles). This caused some minor problems with settlers who occupied lands near the actual fort, but they were solved through cooperation with the Army.

The final UP RR survey of the line across the Laramie Plains was laid out in the summer of 1867 and Grenville Dodge, now a civilian official with the UP RR, platted the site of Laramie City, Dakota Territory, in June on one of the sections given to them under the 1862 Pacific Railroad Act. The Ivinson Mansion block is situated on that square mile of land. That would later prove to be a problem for Edward Ivinson.

The original platting of the city did not portend any friction between the soon to be arriving citizens and the Army because (as noted by Revere) at the time the military reservation size was settled and was officially 6 miles square (36 square miles). Its northern border was just south of the UP RR’s section of land on which Laramie City was laid out. Huge problems for Ivinson and other people who bought town lots from the UP RR began in April 1868 and through 1874, when on June 28, 1869, the military reservation was officially increased in size to 9 miles square (why this was done is unclear). The lots purchased by the town’s residents now lay on the proclaimed military reservation.

This caused the ownership of the lots to be in doubt. For example, the lot where the Laramie Plains Museum is located was purchased by Edward Ivinson November 23, 1870, and transferred to him by the UP RR. But because the Army claimed ownership the title was not cleared. Laramie residents apparently caused enough commotion over the problem that as early as 1871 bills were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to reduce the size of the military reservation. The bill languished in Congress for another three years. After much additional complaining by the residents, the U.S. Government finally rectified the situation on June 9, 1874, when the reservation was reduced in size to approximately 5 by 6 miles, placing Laramie City outside of the reservation.

Titles were cleared up over several years, much to the relief of the lot owners. Ivinson’s block was transferred from the Army to the UP RR in January 1875. But it was still another two years before he finally got clear title to the land where he would eventually build the mansion (all of block 178 of the original town of Laramie).

In a way, the confusing situation would be beneficial to Ivinson. After Laramie City was officially chartered in January 1874, it began to tax personal and real property within city limits. When Ivinson got this tax bill, he sued the city claiming that his property was still owned by the U.S. Army and could not be taxed. The Wyoming Territory Supreme Court partially found in his favor, ruling that he only had to pay tax on his personal property not his real estate. Similarly, in May 1875, Edward Ivinson, Laramie mayor H. B. Rumsey (who also owned a small share of Ivinson’s bank) worked with Stephen Downey and UPRR land agent O. F. Davis in concert to determine the value of the lots in Laramie and consequently the taxes owed. Never one to miss an economic opportunity, Ivinson was able to determine the value of the Lots and thus save himself from the potential tax burden. However, the U.S. Government only held title to the land where he would eventually build the mansion (all of block 178 of the original town of Laramie).

In the summer of 1866 the military reservation was increased in size to 9 miles square. This caused Ivinson’s block to be on the new reservation. The problem that as early as 1871 bills were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to reduce the size of the military reservation. The bill languished in Congress for another three years. After much additional complaining by the residents, the U.S. Government finally rectified the situation on June 9, 1874, when the reservation was reduced in size to approximately 5 by 6 miles, placing Laramie City outside of the reservation.

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BONUS: The first person to spot the spelling error on the map wins a personal tour (max 8 people) of the Ivinson Mansion by Kim Viner. Email him at kviner@msn.com if you think you know the answer.
CARING FOR ARTIFACTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF CONSTRUCTION

When we have so many other things going—with the expansion, weddings and summer tourism activities—the very important work of our curatorial staff and volunteers becomes a background occurrence, but still focuses on the most important thing we do here—historic preservation! Construction disruptions from demolition and outside elements as the old opened to the new, and the awful amounts of dust raised with the removal of old and replacement of new drywall required some smart remedies and several local experts stepped up to help us out.

The photo, right, shows critical analysis of the artifacts that were impacted on the 2nd level of the Alice Hardie Stevens Center during construction. Here we have Janet Woods, UW Library Services; Sarah Gadd, former LPM Curator and Registrar at UW Art Museum, with Cameron Green and Jandyne Shackelford, both UW student interns at the UW Art Museum, assessing damages and solutions for the construction impact. Sarah came to the LPM on Tuesday, May 22 to conduct a training for LPM curatorial staff and volunteers, demonstrating techniques to use in dusting artwork that has been subjected to fine planter dust from occurrences like construction. Behind the team can be seen the empty art storage bins, and some of our storage shelves covered with plastic sheeting on the upper level floor above the newly-renovated and expanded Alice Hardie Stevens Center. As the fine brushes and hand held vacuum are used, some dust enters the air so face masks are needed, plus disposable nitrile gloves to protect artwork and frames from oils that may be on hands. Sarah donated smocks that our help- ers were able to wear. Janet Woods, continued to come to our rescue with reassuring advice and hands on help. Pictured, left, are Judy Knight, LPM Collection Manager, Janet Woods, and Deisy Vaske, Library Specialist. Janet found teachable moments for her own and our LPM staff as a result of the dust accumulated on the LPM books that remained stored in the second floor of the Alice Hardie Stevens Center during construction. Woods patiently showed the proper techniques to use in cleaning dust-covered books and archival paper material. So far, volunteers from Coe Library have donated 20 hours of time to the LPM to clean books. Because the second floor of the AHSC is not completely cleared of stored material, nor thoroughly dusted itself, the work needed to be done outside so the dust could blow away. The cleaned books were boxed and taken to the curatorial office at 609 University for temporary storage until the AHSC artifact storage areas are dust-free. Shelves for temporary storage were donated by Modern Printing.

Longtime Museum friends, members, and volunteers, sisters Blanche and Bertie Sanders, stopped into the Carriage House Gift Shop. Now into their distinguished years, we don’t see them as often as when they were volunteering in the gardens and as a mansion duster. It was great to see you again, ladies!

Sarah Rhodes and Rachel Alexander used the tedious, important method to brush dust from each and every page.
1. LP&M’s Board Directors have long been hands on helpers with updates and renovations. Above, we have many of our familiar volunteer faces pitching in on a 2010 Saturday in so we could prime and paint new storm windows for the mansion as well as touch up our well-used Alice Hardie Stevens Center. In the photos with the fairly new-to-us historic back bar, you can see Bonnie Miller, Dave Van Oss, Leslie Waggener, John Nutter, Joyce Powell, Pat Kiovsky, Terry and Beverly Roark getting things done.

2. Dave Van Oss and Joyce Powell were important to that project eight years ago and have continued to be leaders for our continuing dreams and renovations—with the Brick Curatorial House, the most recent transformation of the Stone House into upscale, income-generating condos, and this stunning Alice Hardie Stevens Expansion Project.

3. Mary Mountain and Pat Kiovsky, Board President, spent time on that 2010 Saturday doing refurbishing painting and conferring about next jobs that needed to be tackled. We’ve come a long way, baby!

Above, John Nutter and Crystal Griffis, take care of packing down the last load in the Honeywagon haul-away dumpster!

Below, board secretary, Connie Palmer and Chris Walrath, significant representatives of the painting and cleaning crews for the Project freeze as we try to grab a photo.

We caught Joyce Powell working in the rafters, and Mary Mountain cramming in a paint job to freshen up the bridal dressing room before the first wedding!

Left, we see those volunteer tree planters doing their big job. Jerry Schmidt directing traffic, Bob Mountain packing the dirt and Dennis Knight watering. All of these fellows and their wives have given monetarily to the tree fund, as well as Garden Club members, Steve and Carol Hoff.

We well know that our local heroes from the Laramie Fire Department use their trucks, tools and lift to rescue and assist with many needs in our community, but thanks to Stan (retired fireman) Gibson’s connections, LP&M’s Curator, Konnie Cronk, was able to capture a photo she has long hoped for of historic downtown Laramie. Photographic documentation of then and now are important methods for accurately identifying historic moments and places. We are grateful to LFD Crew #1 for giving Konnie the ride and view she was hoping for!

Konnie’s kiddos, Phillip, 5, and Imowynn, 3, were delighted that mom got to work with the fire-fighting-guys. They had big smiles from the seat of the shiny truck.

Here’s one of the important shots Konnie was trying to get: looking west on Grand (Jeffrey’s Bistro is on the right bottom corner.)

Laramie Firemen Assist with History Documentation

Above: The 1910 historic back bar still remains in the newly revitalized Event Center—a stunning showpiece in the facility that often is just the touch to help “sell” the venue for events. LP&M raised funding to acquire the piece in 2008, when the Wyoming Territorial Prison was moving from private foundation management to state governance. Needing to be true to the provenance of the WTP, 1873-1903, this stunning remnant of the Foundation’s dream of a Western theme park had to leave. We are very grateful to the donors who help us salvage this unique slice of history. Ron and Anne Olsen, outstanding LP&M volunteers, refurbished the weather-worn wood and stained glass into the piece you see at the Alice Hardie Stevens Center today. Most recently, volunteer Marcia Chicoine gave it gleaming new coats of polish before she moved back to South Dakota.

**Sample Tea Menu**

This one from the June 19, 2018

TEA on TUESDAY

**Sweets**

- Blueberry-Lemon Card Tarts
- Chocolate Cherry Scones
- Scottish Shortbread
- Cream Caramels
- Red Velvet Donut Bites

**Savories**

- Cucumber Tea Sandwiches
- Wasabi Cranberry Meatballs
- Olive Tea Sausages
- Gougères (Parmesan Puffs)
- Pimiento-filled Celery Bites

**Savory Extras**

- Fruity Sorbet
- French Meringue Pecans
- Tea with Lemons & Cream

**TEA PROGRAMS**

REMIND US OF OUR SPECIAL HISTORY:

- May 22nd Tea: Laramie Celebrates 150 Years!
- June 19th Tea: Bergfeld Williams, Immigrants as our Domestic Story
- July 24th Tea: Bridal Gowns & Brides Throughout the Decades

*A small amount of tickets are still available for the July Tea. Call the office if you’re interested.*
Saturday, August 18, 2018
(8/18/18)

The date for this year’s special end-of-the-summer celebration in support of our Laramie Plains Museum Complex, including the finish work for the stage and climate controlled basement in the new Alice Hardie Stevens expansion. If you or someone you know would like to attend, but aren’t sure you’re on our invitation list, please call the museum 742-4448 so we don’t miss you. Invitations will be sent out in early July. Tickets are $100 per person for an evening of great food and drink, music, auctions and friends. This year’s event will mirror the kind of festivities that those early pioneers arriving on the first Union Pacific passenger train might have enjoyed. There will be music, appetizers, entertainment and libations in the gardens, as usual, and then we will retire to the newly renovated Event Center for our dinner. Inside we will experience Alice Freeman’s lovely harp during dinner, beverages from the historic back bar, auctions, and a special early-Laramie melodrama from The Unexpected Company.

We would love to see you here as part of this celebration and are encouraging all attendees to come in historic attire, if possible. Ideas for such garb? How about a railroad worker, a dance hall girl, a businessman or adventurer to the new town, a school teacher come West, a cowboy, pioneering mother or even an outlaw? There are all kinds of good possibilities! We will have Tessa Satake with Dreaming Hollow Photography here to document all of the fun with vintage photos.

The Evening gives us the opportunity to celebrate how far we’ve come as one of the most well-respected historic house museums in the Rocky Mountain region. It reinforces our belief that there will always be care, support and funding for a sustained future for this outstanding Laramie landmark. We hope you’ll join us!

CORPORATE & FAMILY-SPONSORED TABLES are available for $1500 for a table of 8-10 with wine, promotion of your business or family, and a memento of the Evening for each person at the table. Sponsored tables are important underwriters of this special event so that more of the profits can boost our work at this beautiful historic house museum. Call our office (742-4448) if you are interested in hosting a corporate or family table.

The Art Fest on the Ivinson Lawn

Sunday, July 15, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Art Fest will again be offered on our Ivinson property the last Sunday of Jubilee Days. Laramie locals and visitors have come to expect that a special day of genteel strolling of the wares of local artists and crafters winds up the busyness of Jubilee celebrations. After the parades, pancakes, Beer Fest and rodeos, come take in the beauty of the Mansion grounds and the expanded Alice Hardie Stevens Center. Have your Jubilee Days guests take a walk through tour of the museum for just $2.00 and enjoy sidewalk sales, popcorn and other treats provided by the Museum’s teen volunteers and the amazing artists, music and authors who are here!

We’ll for sure have food vendors this year. If you are an artist, crafter, musician or food vendor wanting to be part of this special event, just call us at the Carriage House office—742-4448—ANB BANK’S enthusiastic crew will be here again this for the Art Fest. Last year, their fun presence and snow cones in the middle of the East Lawn were a giant hit at this event. Don’t miss it!

How about remembering the Museum each time you purchase from Amazon? If you’re an online shopper, this is an easy way to give to LPM without straining your debit card. When you shop at Amazon and see the AmazonSmile logo pop up, know that the company will give a small reward to us with each purchase. Your shopping matters. Or if you’re not already shopping at Amazon and seeing that note pop up, shop for your favorite things at smile.amazon.com/ch/83-6007519 and Amazon will donate to Laramie Plains Museum Association. Thanks!

SUMMER HOURS FOR THE MUSEUMS

Don’t how many of you realize that from early June through late August, the Laramie Plains Museum at the Ivinson Mansion is open FULL TIME 6 DAYS A WEEK. That’s Tuesday through Saturday 9:00 to 5:00 and summer Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. for guided tours. Bring or send your guests!

The Women’s House for Historic Women (Louisa Swain Plaza and Museum) downtown is open Tuesday through Saturday 11:00 to 5:00 and summer Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Come on down!