

ECHOES OF CHRISTMAS PAST



Above: Kim Viner, our preeminent historian on Edward and Jane Ivinson, has been a host at earlier Open Houses, and is a wonderful donor and docent for Laramie Plains Museum. His many books on Laramie and Ivinson history are offered at our Carriage House Gift Shop throughout the year, but are especially good as Christmas gifts for those who love history. Kim has also kept the public interested and inspired throughout the pandemic lockdown with his *This Day in History* posts and finely-researched articles for the *Laramie Boomerang*. Most recently, his excellent article on **Dale St. John's impressive WWII service** is one to note (and maybe reference again online.)



Left: Jolly Elves, Donna Thompson and Judy Erickson brought smiles to an earlier Holiday Open House. Both of these elves are longtime volunteers and supporters of the Museum. **Donna** is a docent, decorator, and event helper, and **Judy** is a *Feather Duster* (helping keep the Mansion clean) and decorator. Both elves are great donors and members.

Below: Another special elf, Shirla Walker, is shown decorating a tree for our *Holiday Heroes*. Our veterans are honored each year on the 3rd floor of the Ivinson Mansion by volunteers extraordinaire, **Shirla and her husband, Danny**. A great pictorial tree of veterans is there this year, and the main 3rd floor exhibits have a gingerbread house you have to see!



Right: Another great, longtime supporter and volunteering elf, Ron Olsen, was caught wandering the new Events Center, of which he was so much a part of creating.



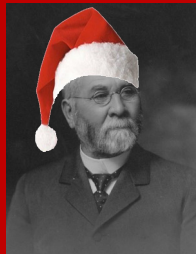
FUN FACTS ABOUT EARLY CHRISTMAS



JANE IVINSON REMEMBERED the 1868 holiday:
 "The first Christmas tree was given in the dining rooms of the new railroad hotel, the present Thornburgh. This building was built in one month in September; we all worked very hard, especially Mrs. Eliza Boyd, who proved to be a most indefatigable and earnest worker, and all of us entered into the undertaking with all of our energies, bent on making a success. The men going out and bringing in greens, we decorated the dining room beautifully and as the guests assembled on this first Christmas evening, friends met who had not seen each other for months, and exchanged greetings with hearts full of love and peace. When the passenger train passed through that evening, the passengers expressed surprise at seeing in that wilderness of sand and sagebrush, such a beautiful Christmas display of good cheer and plenty. We distributed one hundred books, besides other presents. So you can see how the Sunday school had increased from 12 to 100 in such a short time. I am sure no tree laden with richer and more costly presents ever gave one-half the pleasure of that evergreen tree with its load of books and toys did that evening."
 Excerpted From Jane Ivinson's letter to Laramie Woman's Club in 1899

Illustrious Edward Ivinson loved to portray Santa Claus!

"The new town had its social side as well as the hard work of building. The first Christmas (1868) a festive party was held at the railroad station, a large and attractive building at the end of South A street (now Ivinson Avenue) which served as a meeting place for the town. Ivinson gloried in his role as Santa Claus, a part which he repeated for many years."



Excerpted from the Laramie Plains Museum Docent Handbook, pp 16-17



LARAMIE PLAINS MUSEUM HISTORIC IVINSON MANSION

DECEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Just like the Girls School Girls in the snow at the Mansion, join us for a great Laramie Tradition!

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11,
 3:00 TO 6:00 P.M.
 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12,
 1:00 TO 4:00 P.M.**

No charge to tour the beautifully decorated HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE showcased throughout the Museum rooms. French hens in the Kitchen, geese in the Smoking Room, pied pipers in the Music Room and much more! Masks are required this year because of the mix of guests, and we'll offer you a guide for your touring of this stunning Historic House Museum. CHRISTMAS SALES IN THE ALICE HARDIE STEVENS EVENT CENTER TOO! COME JOIN US!



*Historic Ivinson Mansion
Laramie Plains Museum
Newsletter*

The Historic Ivinson Mansion Newsletter is published 4 times a year in Laramie, Wyoming a year by the Laramie Plains Museum Association. 603 E. Ivinson Avenue Laramie, WY 82070 Phone: 307-742-4448 Email: lpmdirector@laramiemuseum.org Web site: www.laramiemuseum.org

Send changes of address to the Museum address or e-mail (above)

Graphics Design and Editor:
Mary Mountain

Reporters:
Judy Knight
Mary Mountain
Gina Gibson

Assistance to the Editor
Emmaline Velasquez
Helen Pugsley
Amy Allen
Marian Stordahl

Contributing Photographers
Christian Sarkine
Danny Walker
Joyce Powell
Mary Mountain



Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Laramie, WY
Permit No. 23

Address Service Requested

The Museum's Annual Holiday Open House *12 Days of Christmas* with wonderful designs in the Ivinson Mansion rooms: French hens in the Kitchen, geese a-laying in the Smoking Room; graceful china and crystal gracing tables. All of this makes the Ivinsons' Mansion enchanting in myriad ways alongside the special sights and sounds of the season. Harpist, Alice Freeman, and songsters *That One Trio* will enhance the holiday atmosphere on Saturday. Our Carriage House Gift Shop gives a 20% discount on all purchases at the Open House and throughout the holidays—until December 18th. We often have 600-800 people viewing the Mansion for this special tradition, but we're guessing there will still be some cautious spirits as we move out from pandemic worries. We are requiring masks because of the mix of many people possibly choosing to attend once again. We have many close areas in the beautiful Mansion architecture so masks will be one of this year's mild protections. We will also have air purifiers on each floor.

Ivinson Mansion Holiday Open House

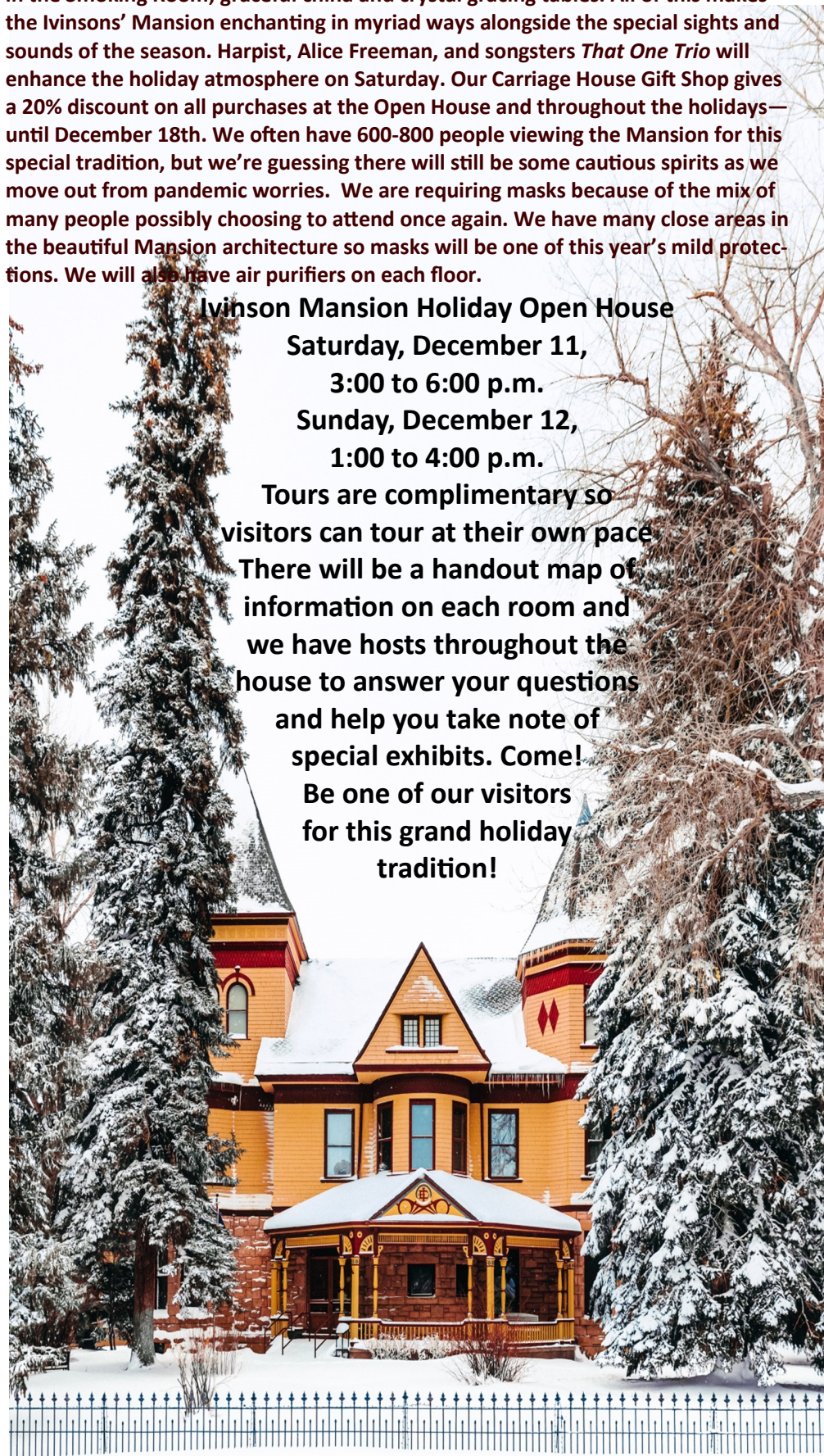
Saturday, December 11,

3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 12,

1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Tours are complimentary so visitors can tour at their own pace. There will be a handout map of information on each room and we have hosts throughout the house to answer your questions and help you take note of special exhibits. Come! Be one of our visitors for this grand holiday tradition!



A postcard sent to George Forbes in Hyannis, Nebraska around 1907 says,

*Hi George.
Still agoing. No snow here.
Only stopped in Chicago for
45 min. No snow here but
pretty cold. Lots of fur coats.
Mary*

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.



1907 Greeting Card, "May all Christmas Joys be Yours" Color printed drawing, embossed with view of Santa Claus putting something in a sock hung at fireplace mantle, with border of holly. Mailed, one cent Franklin stamp, postmark Beatrice, Nebraska, December 26, 1907.



POSTCARD: 1908, greet "A Merry Christmas", printed drawing of 3 kids on a sled. Mailed one cent Franklin stamp, postmark Beatrice, Nebraska, December 21, 1908. Made in Germany is printed on the back.



Receipt for English Plum Pudding

The Genuine

Soak one pound stale bread in a pint of hot milk, and let stand and cool. When cold, add to it one half-pound of sugar and the yolks of 8 eggs beaten to a cream; one pound of raisins, stoned and floured; one pound of zanti currants, washed and floured; a quarter of a pound of citron, cut in strips and dredged with flour; one pound of beef suet, chopped and finely salted; one glass of wine; one glass of brandy; one grated nutmeg; and a tablespoonful of mace, cinnamon and cloves mixed. Beat the whole thing well together and, as the last thing, add the whites of 8 eggs, beaten to a stiff froth. Pour into a cloth previously scaled and dredged with flour. Tie the cloth firmly, leaving room for the pudding to swell, and wait 6 hours. Serve with wine or brandy sauce.

It is best to prepare the ingredients the day before and cover closely.

CHRISTMAS FROM LPM ARCHIVES

Judy Knight, Collections Manager, thought we should give you an insider's look at what she found in our archives, so here you go: the Christmas artifacts and the provenance we actually have on these dear bits of history.



POSTCARD: 1908, greeting "A Merry Christmas" color-printed drawing of green-robed, bearded man carrying a small pine tree and sack of toys on his back, a bundle with a strap on his shoulder in snow scene with house in background. Mailed, one cent Franklin stamp, Beatrice Nebraska, 1908. "Made in Germany" printed on back.



POSTCARD: 1908, Greeting card "May you have a happy Christmas". Color printed and embossed, of holly and berries. Has gold ink. Mailed, one cent Franklin stamp, Postmarked Chicago, Illinois, December 23, 1908. Printed in Bavaria.



Christmas Poem. Printed in Bavaria, no address remains, stamp has been removed but does have postmark of Cheyenne, Wyo. December 20, 1910. Unknown donor.

POSTCARD: 1908, greeting: "A Happy New Year" Color-printed drawing, embossed with gold ink, two elves with pointed hats, one sitting on the moon, one standing on snow, handing sack of money from one to the other, house in background, stars in sky. "Made in Germany" printed on the back. Mailed, one cent Franklin stamp, postmarked Cook, Nebraska, December 24, 1909



HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM MARY MOUNTAIN, LPM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



One year ago, December 2020, we decided to send just a letter, not a newsletter, to all of you. We were coming off a year of lockdowns to normal visitors, tours and events, and still struggling to know just how to gather for the holidays. That's when I sent you my "Imagine" letter—about imagining a year of new beginnings and hopeful moments—basically telling you that in spite of the COVID-19 impacts, we were moving forward, imagining a year of good things ahead. I reflected on what we couldn't do in 2020, but looked forward to all that could be positively done in 2021. And we did just that! We moved forward in smart ways, doing what we could do to reinvigorate things for our staff, our museum guests, rentals and events. We maintained social distances as recommended. We wore masks and shields for tours and placed air circulators in public areas. We had our renters of the Alice Hardie Stevens Event Center sign COVID protocol recommendations and waivers, and we applied for PPP loans (Payroll Protection Plan through our own First Interstate Bank) to help our staff keep their jobs during the worrisome months. It was a smart thing and those loans—used only to assist with three months of payroll in both 2020 and 2021—are now completely satisfied. No outstanding debts for LPM, but a staff that stayed with us, maneuvering the limits of the pandemic in smart and efficient ways.

As I look back on this "Imagined year", I am ever thankful for you—our friends, members, volunteers, visionaries—who do what needs to be done, in spite of rough, even difficult circumstances. Our **Laramie Garden Club** members kept us inspired with outside work for our spring, summer and fall flowers and landscape. **Judy Knight, Kim Viner and Konnie Cronk** kept newsprint and social media audiences filled with tales and memorable facts, so that our history continued to be told in spite of adjustments with public interactions. **The Unexpected Company Senior Theatre** supported our COVID-modified *Evening at the Ivinsons'*, giving us a fine taste that they're still here, still very talented and ready for their post-isolation Acts. The Laramie Plains Museum Association **Board Directors** kept us feeling uplifted and supported with our necessary, sometimes hard, decisions for events, tours and smart protections for locals and visitors. And you, **our LPM donors, members and volunteers**, were, quite simply, extraordinarily supportive in the face of pandemic affectations—stepping up in monetary faithfulness and continued encouragement for our ongoing work so Laramie, Albany County, and Wyoming's history could continue to be preserved, showcased, shared and celebrated. We are here, shining as brightly as ever, because of all of you. We remain successful and thriving because of your great support and care. Thank you so very much.

Warmest Wishes to all our Museum friends at this special time of year!



On The 12th Day of Christmas
My True Love Gave To Me...
12 DRUMMERS DRUMMING
11 Pipers Piping
10 Lords a Leaping
9 Ladies Dancing
8 Maids A Milking
7 Swans a Swimming
6 Geese a Laying
5 Golden Rings
4 Calling Birds
3 FRENCH HENS
2 Turtle Doves
And a Partridge
in a Pear Tree

AND, the beautifully harmonizing sounds of **That One Trio** and the charming strings of **Alice Freeman's harp** will be alongside all of the above-stated menagerie inside the decorated **Ivinson Mansion** this Christmas. Come see and hear!

From the Desk of a Docent

Gina Gibson, Laramie Plains Museum Senior Docent

In 2006, a friend from Cheyenne asked me to help her chaperone a school group she was bringing to the Laramie Plains Museum. The only tour I had previously taken was many years before when my son, Ryan, was a Junior Docent. But this day in 2006 began a love affair with the Historic Iverson Mansion housing the Laramie Plains Museum. Shortly after that tour, I answered Mary Mountain's request to help her as her administrative assistant. As much as I enjoyed that, I found that my "sweet spot" was really giving tours to the tourists from all over the world who visit us each year.

Fast forward to 2021, and here I am still giving tours! My love for history, and for people, has continued to make this a highlight of my life. This year has been an especially meaningful one for me. When the Museum reopened after the 2020 pandemic lockdown, I decided I would like to docent with Germaine St. John on Tuesdays. Germaine had just begun volunteering as an LPM docent with a regular shift and said she would enjoy sharing the hour-plus guided tours. We agreed that she would give guests the tour of the Mansion's first floor rooms and history, and I would complete the tours of the second and third floors. We have been a great team.

But, one of the best things this year has been the times between tours when I have been able to visit with Germaine and ask about her life. I love to meet people and hear their stories. The more I heard, the more I thought parts of her interesting life would be great to share with all of you.

Germaine told me that she was born in Sheridan, Wyoming in 1934 during the Depression. She was an only child. Her father was a mechanical superintendent for the *Sheridan Press*, and her mother played the piano for silent films and at Fort Mackenzie. Germaine's father brought the family to Laramie in July 1941, with his work for Wyoming newspapers. He took over as mechanical superintendent of the presses for the *Daily Bulletin* morning paper. The family planned to be in Laramie temporarily, but the war broke out in December of that year and they never left. Her father was not drafted because newspapers were considered an essential industry.



Germaine at the ice rink.

Germaine attended Nellie Isles grade school through the 6th grade, and then Laramie junior and senior high school at the Civic Center. In November of 1941, on a lark, she asked her mom if she could go to the ice skating rink. The next year she begged her parents for skates as a combined birthday and Christmas gift, and lived at the rink from age six through high school. During her junior and senior high school years, the University of Wyoming hockey team hired her at \$10 a game to provide entertainment during intermissions. Germaine spoke fondly of Ray and Alma Johnson who took her under their wings during those years. They directed the Laramie Ice Follies, and Germaine was able to be one of the performers. She shared Follies programs with me from several of the years when she participated. She also told me that she won a \$500 prize in a regional competition in Casper, and skated through her late teens. Germaine gave her last performance when she served as Laramie's mayor in the 1970s.

It has been so fun to learn her story—her history—and share it with you. It's what we do here at the Laramie Plains Museum, and I love it! I hope you have also enjoyed getting to know Germaine a little better. I know she joins me in inviting you to join our docent team here at the Laramie Plains Museum. (Following the winter break, we docents will begin giving tours again March 1, 2022. If you love people, and you love history you might find that this is your "sweet spot" too!



Crystal Griffis moved to Oklahoma City this fall and we're all scrambling to cover the many things she juggled. We do wish her well in her new endeavors, closer to family, but we miss her and her daughter Aubree. Above is a fun snapshot of Amy Allen and Crystal as Gift Shop elves during one of our earlier Holiday Open Houses.



Speaking of Gift Shop elves, new volunteer, Jean DeGennaro is learning the ropes of being a docent, set up and tweaks with setting our Gift Shop holiday stock, and as we begin the new year and new budget, Jean just may be the new face of rental coordinations for our special events on this beautiful property.

FACES AT LPM

"Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other's gold."



New all-around-employee Helen Pugsley is figuring out all facets of our Museum complex—from giving tours and welcoming tourists to helping with our new website, setups, clean ups, and sales of rentals of the Alice Hardie Stevens Event Center.



Vince Wilson is another all-around volunteer, helping in the curatorial realm, with pulling the newsletter together, and with set ups of events when we're in a pinch. A substitute teacher with a major in History, he's a natural around here and in the outdoors for adventures with his wife, Megan.



Dick Meranda, well known independent contractor, is currently popping in once a week to help us with fix-it jobs, and are we ever grateful! His skills are perfect with shoring up wobbly bannisters and steps, replacing faulty door knobs and locks, smoothing the stickiness of our old doors and hinges....you name it! We have lots for Dick to work on, so it's great to have him around when he has free time.



Not pictured but very helpful as interns for us this fall: Elena Lompe, has been working with Judy Knight for experience with collections—a quiet, bright light in our world, she is volunteering for LPM as she applies to grad schools. Jeremiah Wordeman, a UW student, has been great, extra help for Amy Allen with rental setups. Strong lifting skills with the dramatic increase in event rentals are much appreciated for our exceptional staff of women.

And, our old friend, Jerry Hansen, passed from us and this world on November 19th—so recently, it still hurts. Jerry was our kind, amazing volunteer historian who gave so many hours to helping us remember and care about history—especially railroad history—you'd have thought we were paying him. We miss ya, Jer!

