Volunteer Opportunities

- Serve on one of our Boards
- Catalogue and store donated artifacts
- Assist with Housekeeping
- Rotate & create new exhibits
- Complete minor interior repairs (paint, plaster, woodwork)
- Organize archives
- Computerized data entry
- Plan events
- Present your favorite topic

Heritage Museum Advisory Board:
- Vickie McCubbin
- John Young
- Anita Cantu
- Jasper Smith
- Marilyn Morton, Council Liaison

Heritage Museum Society Board:
- Lois Martin, President
- Vickie McCubbin, Vice-President
- Vacant, Secretary
- Vacant, Treasurer
- Curt Tidmore, Fundraising Chair

In collaboration with American Legion Post 33 of Independence, Oregon, the Heritage Museum has begun participating in the Veteran of the Month Program. The third Saturday of every month at 1:00 pm, a flag is raised in honor of a local veteran. This flag flies over the Museum for a month and then is given to the family of the recognized veteran. For the first few months, Post 33 will select the veteran to be honored. As submissions increase veterans will be honored as they are submitted. This program gives families, friends, and the community the opportunity to honor deceased, honorably discharged veterans in a public ceremony for the service they have rendered to their country.

The first two veterans honored have been Seaman First Class Mancil Russell and Lt Edgar (Eddie) Fulton Pomeroy (USAF). The ceremonies are centered around the veteran’s families, allowing time for speakers, stories, and reminiscing followed by refreshments inside the Museum. A big thank you to Billy Whisenant and Post 33 for donating and installing the flagpole, and to Brent DeMoe of Polk County Veteran Services Office and Rick Seniff for building and installing a new display case at the flagpole. This case displays information on the veteran being honored and will be updated each month.

We are proud to be a part of this program and encourage anyone who wishes to attend the ceremonies to stop by. If you know of a veteran you would like recognized, applications are available via the Post’s website https://www.americanlegionpost33independenceor.org/ and at the Heritage Museum.
Happy Birthday Independence!

February 23, 2019 marked the second annual celebration of the 1886 incorporation of the City of Independence by combining the communities of Hill and Thorp Towns. The party also commemorated the 60th anniversary of the 1959 Oregon Trail reenactment, the “On to Oregon Cavalcade.” Upon arriving at the museum visitors enjoyed seeing the refresh of the Blacksmith Exhibit including new signage.

Another highlight of the afternoon was the introduction of the new Museum Manager, Carly Annable, and the new Museum Assistant, Amy Christensen. Along with buttons celebrating the town’s 133rd birthday, attendees received a gift bag that included accounts of the 1959 Cavalcade, a cookbook from trail travelers, and a commemorative coin.

The Independence Library was once again the starting point for this year’s scavenger/history hunt. Participants found their way to storefront windows at various locations downtown to secure answers for the crossword puzzle. Clues focused on the 1959 Trek from Independence, Missouri to Independence, Oregon. While some downtown windows held clues other businesses displayed information about historic downtown and the Willamette River waterfront.

All who completed the crossword were given tickets for prizes. City Councilor, Marilyn Morton pulled the winning tickets and prizewinners, young and old were treated to gift certificates from generous Independence business owners. A delicious birthday cake from the downtown Oven Bird bakery topped off this year’s party. Plans are already underway for next year’s even better party!
The Heritage Museum will be hosting the Oregon Black Pioneers’ kiosk “Racing to Change: Oregon’s Civil Rights Years” at the museum for the month of August. The museum will kick off the exhibit by hosting a presentation on the lead up to Oregon’s Civil Rights movement by Gwen Carr of the Oregon Black Pioneers.

This collapsible 10 ft long, double sided kiosk utilizes key portions of the original exhibit from the Oregon Historical Society to focus particularly on the cultural and political organizations that were leaders in Oregon’s civil rights history in the 1960 and 70s.

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Join us as we recognize our August Veteran of the Month, John Pfaff.

The Veteran of the Month program gives families, friends, and the community the opportunity to honor deceased honorably discharged veterans in a public ceremony for the service they have rendered to their country. The flag raising ceremony takes place the third Saturday of each month at 1pm. If you know a veteran what you would like to be recognized, applications are available at the Heritage Museum and at www.americanlegionpost33independenceor.org
Artifact of the Month: The Brownie Camera

By Gabrielle Miller

This artifact is the Brownie camera Target six-20. It was made by Eastman Kodak Co. and was manufactured from July 1946 until May 1952. It was a popular model for that time, and features an art deco style face with vertical lines framing the edges. It became very popular for children as a primer for photography and was also popular for soldiers to take with them to document the war.

The camera was a cheap and accessible for the masses with easy buttons and control mechanisms for everyone to understand. These cameras were originally designed and manufactured for the masses to gain access to art and documentation of real life events. No longer did you need an expensive camera to shoot worthy photography. The brownie camera was cheap (only around $1.00, the equivalent to around $30 today) and could shoot just as amazing photography as an expensive camera could. Brownie cameras were popular for lower income consumers, as they were reasonably affordable and thus made the art of photography more accessible. This accessibility was similar to the way in which woodblock and plating prints were for the masses, but cameras had the opposite effect since it was difficult to copy the images; often times only one print could ever be made.

The Brownie Camera was named after the brownies in folklore who belonged to a house and performed household chores in exchange for milk/cream or honey. They were named for the Palmer Cox characters from his cartoon called "Brownies" that was popular at the time of the camera’s production. Palmer Cox portrayed them as "characters, who portray human nature with its goodness and strength and also its follies, but never its baseness". Although the brownies belonged to folklore and eras of the past living in a utopian society, they were very curious about the modern world and technology. In the cartoon, brownies would use phones and trains for travel. This meant they were prime for Cox to loan their images to companies for advertisements. The Brownies popularity with children made them ideal for advertising to that demographic. Kodak even went so far as to include a fairy origin of the camera and made a club for the Brownie users that sponsored Brownie themed books.
A museum’s exhibit floor is where the stories are told. It’s where the community comes together to engage in their shared history and hopefully learn something new. The exhibit floor is really the face of the museum. When you see an update, it is the product of hours, days, and weeks of research and effort. In the Heritage Museum, like most museums, there is a world of history beneath the exhibit floor where the staff and volunteers do the primary work of a museum organization.

Even a small museum such as ours has a collection of objects, books, and archival materials that number around 10,000 items. The museum opened in 1976 and has had several different curators since that time, as well as several systems for tracking the collection including ledgers, a card catalog, paper files, and most recently, a museum industry software system called Past Perfect. Due to time, changes in staffing, and events such as the basement flooding in 2012, there are sometimes inconsistencies in the data. Last year, we conducted a sample inventory of the collection and determined the accuracy of the database. Museum staff and board members attended industry conferences to be trained in current industry standards and to build networks with other local museum professionals. The effort culminated this season in a project to organize the storage area and update our Past Perfect database. It’s a long term project that is ongoing during exhibit updates upstairs. It’s a project that could benefit greatly from an increase in volunteers!

The effort to perfect our collection data began with organizing the processing area. It was a big project! Staff chose to begin with the tool collection since the Blacksmith Shop Exhibit was being updated at the same time. It was a natural starting point. Staff also cleared out a storage area in the basement to house all of the tool collection. Another big job!

After this, staff began the process of checking every tool item against the collections computer database. Each item was checked for it’s condition, photographed, labeled and packed into the new Tool Room. Now all items in this area of the museum storage are perfectly accounted for. Our goal is to approach each and every part of the collection in the same manner over the coming months.

It is important to focus on this less glamorous side of museum work because an accurate database increases our ability to preserve and share these objects with our visitors. A lost or improperly catalogued item cannot be seen in an exhibit and it is unable to add to the story of Independence. These efforts are really some of the most important work we do in the Heritage Museum.
We are happy to introduce and welcome the Heritage Museum’s new Assistant, Amy Christensen! Amy is a lifelong Oregonian, originally from the Hillsboro area. She received her Bachelor of Science in Cultural Anthropology from Oregon State University in 2007. Shortly after her family bought the 1920 De Coaster home in downtown Independence in 2015 she took her daughter for a walk. At that time she noticed a charming museum nearby her house and said a feeling came over her that she wanted to be involved. Soon after Amy started volunteering in the museum by serving on the Museum Society and Advisory Board. During her time as a volunteer she updated the museum’s military exhibit, created a timeline of the history of the founders, and organized a significant analysis of the museum’s inventory.

In January 2019 Amy stepped down from her board positions and was hired as the part-time museum assistant. Since that time, she can most often be found in the collection storage area organizing the artifacts and updating the museum’s database system.

“Well I was a student at Oregon State I started as an Interior Design major but after taking an Anthropology course I found my real passion,” Amy said. “In museum work I have found the perfect marriage of my love for human history, organization and creating beautiful spaces.” She is also working on exhibit updates, along with the new museum manager, Carly Annable.

At home, Amy is a military spouse and mother. Nathan and Amy just celebrated 17 years of marriage. Her four great kids love that she is working in the museum. She has a true love for travel and adventure and loves sharing those with her family. She may not be a new face in the museum, but we welcome Amy to her new role as Museum Assistant!
Hello, I am Gabrielle Miller the summer intern at the Heritage Museum. I interned from April through June, and am very happy to be working with the wonderful people here and to help make the museum the best it can be. Currently I am working on re-designing the wagon exhibit and have been enjoying the opportunity to put my creative side to work.

As well as working at the museum, I am an Anthropology major at Western Oregon University with an interest in traveling, art, and culture. My major allows me to experience all these wonderful interest and will hopefully bring more travelling in my future where I can put my museum experience to work. I hope to specialize in Cultural Anthropology but have a deep interest in Archeology as well and what the past can contribute to our future. This interest is what led me to the museum and the work of providing knowledge of the past to the people for them to know and share. My passion for researching and preserving the past made the Heritage Museum the best place for me to intern and will give me the experience I will need for my future career.

The Heritage Museum has taught me many things and has given me insight into the hard work of the museum staff. Working on the wagon exhibit has been great as well as challenging, but by collaborating with Amy Christensen on the project it has shown me how two like-minded people working on a project together can achieve great things and create something worthy for the public eye. For the exhibit, I conducted extensive research into the history of the Oregon Trail and the history of the wagons they used to provide accurate and interesting information for the public. While designing the panels for which this information will be provided, I learned to appreciate the work others do as well as their patience and attention to detail. My hope is to bring the knowledge I have gained through this work back to the people of Independence so they may remember and honor a part of their heritage. Re-designing this exhibit has afforded me the experience I can use to hopefully work in a museum again, and to continue my passion for knowledge and culture and sharing them with the world.

I hope you come stop by the museum to revisit the past to honor and learn from it. Maybe you will discover a new interest as I did!
Become a Member to Support Your Museum

Membership fees and monetary donations go to the non-profit Heritage Museum Society. Benefits of membership include, but are not limited to, newsletters, special events notices, and 10% off purchases.

Return this section and make checks payable to:
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P.O. Box 7
Independence, OR 97351

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