

RENOVATIONS

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Evermine — the Williamsons' Portland-based custom labeling company that ships across the U.S. and overseas. Taped on the floor are the outlines where the company's machinery will be installed.

Jeanne Williamson noted that some of the construction is already completed on the room that will become the plant floor, with work still to come — added ceiling height, new roofing, additional windows, updated heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

The top floor, which was originally a ballroom, has also undergone renovations. The drop ceiling was removed entirely and the old bar was dismantled. A new fire suppression system and elevator will be installed.

While the interior is getting a major overhaul, much of the exterior will also be restored to its original architecture.

"We can see how it used to be done, so it can be restored," Williamson said.

The current design plans include rebuilding the front entrance and creating a new side entrance at basement level. Additionally, the broken rock face on the ground



Isabella Crowley/The Observer

Jeanne Williamson gives a tour of the renovations happening at 1124 Washington St., La Grande, on Friday May 27, 2022. The former Elks Lodge most recently housed the Maridell Center.

level of the exterior will be removed and the original facade restored.

While the Williamsons are drawing inspiration from the historic exterior, they

are also adding new features, such as a patio. The new outdoor space will replace the current entryway and driveway.

The couple declined to comment on how

SEEING THE CHANGES

Jeanne and David Williamson are hosting two renovation tours of La Grande's former Elks Lodge on the corner of Washington Avenue and Depot Street to showcase the work that has been done and discuss future plans for the historic building.

The tours will take place on Wednesday, June 22, at noon and on Tuesday, July 26, at 5 p.m. Interested individuals can sign up to attend by emailing Lorraine Ferron at Lorrainef@evermine.com to reserve a spot.

much the building cost to purchase or the amount invested in renovations.

It will take years to achieve the Williamsons' vision for the building. The current objective is to make the first floor functional to move Evermine to La Grande from Portland. Construction and renovation work will continue on the rest of the building.

The couple plan to include three areas for the community — the ballroom, the basement and a small portion of the first floor where Jeanne Williamson would like to create an espresso bar and small bookshop dedicated to Oregon history.

"There are so many stories and so much history written by the people of Oregon that I want to share," she said.

SUMMIT

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the panel.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, joked that Levy "made it impossible not to show up." Others laughed, and this is how the panel discussion went.

Levy, Dembrow, Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, Sen. Jama Kayse, D-Portland, Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, Rep. David Gomberg, D-Otis, Sen. Janeen Sollman, D-Hillsboro, Sen. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, and Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, all were on the panel — up on stage, at the same time.

"One side can't do it on its own," said Kayse, chair of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development. Kayse stated we must come together to solve our shared problems.

Others agreed, with Dembrow stating we must see one another as people, beyond the bumper stickers on our vehicles.

Findley said opposing people were not enemies, and Frederick expressed the sentiment that there are no "good guys" and "bad guys" in the Legislature. Instead, there are people with varying opinions, who all want to improve the lives of Oregonians.

"People want to do the best they can," he said.

Gomberg echoed this statement, as he said members have differences in party, experi-

ence, geography and more, but they have an "affection" for one another.

Legislators, including Hayward and Findley, made a point of saying they have a duty to represent the entire state, not just their own particular district. Also, part of their job includes reaching out to people outside their districts, learning what they can from them and then returning home to tell their neighbors.

According to Dembrow, legislators must educate their constituents on the "bigger picture."

This education, according to the Portland Democrat, includes telling the people of his district about Hermiston.

Other panelists shared similar feelings, adding distant communities, places and people have

a lot more in common than often thought. Sollman said she relates to people in Eastern Oregon because she, too, comes from a farming area. Frederick also shared his farming background.

Hayward said education goes the other way, too. She said Portland is not as bad as the media says. This was something she could tell audiences in Eastern Oregon.

They pointed out that many decisions aren't contentious. Republicans and Democrats actually find common ground on most issues, according to panel members. They are able to push forward on issues like improving sewer systems and resolving many water issues, without partisan complaints, Gomberg and Helm said.

Gomberg added, though, that there is a change happening in state government. Much turnover is taking place, he said. This means many friendships are lost, too. And legislators must work hard to create new relationships; those connections help to advance legislation.

Speaking at the end, Smith expressed confidence in the ability of new legislators to work with one another.

Smith praised the intelligence and integrity of the three major candidates for governor — Democrat Tina Kotek, unaffiliated Betsy Johnson and Republican Christine Brazan — and said he would be able to work with any of them.

Levy said she would be happy to invite legislators back for the next summit.

CAPSULE

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Ronnie Allen, a La Grande local historian who has done extensive research on Meeker's stone markers and is a member of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

Allen has organized the time capsule opening event with major help Dale Counsell, of La Grande, a fellow local history aficionado. Counsell said the Oregon Trail has special meaning to him because a number of his relatives came to the Northwest on the Oregon Trail.

A time capsule of distinction

The stone marker is among 35 Meeker set up along the Oregon Trail during the three journeys he made across the United States to promote efforts to preserve the overland route.

The stone marker on Walnut Street may be the only one Meeker put up that had a time capsule.

"It is the only marker that had a time capsule, according to his diaries,"



Isabella Crowley/The Observer

These items were collected in 2022 to replace those in a time capsule contained in an Oregon Trail stone marker on Walnut Street in La Grande. The 1906 time capsule will be opened on Thursday, June 23.

Allen said.

The time capsule will be opened with assistance from the La Grande Parks and Recreation Department, which will be using a backhoe for the work, according to Stu Spence, the department director.

Once the contents of the time capsule are removed they will be replaced by items Allen and Counsell have collected for a new time capsule. They will include an Oregon Trail brochure, a copy of the Overland Journal (a quarterly

publication of the Oregon-California Association) plus items that are or recently have been integral parts of our daily lives today including two face masks, a COVID-19 home test kit, an iPhone, a \$2 bill and a quarter. Allen said he is not sure if all of these items will fit into the time capsule.

Once the new time capsule items are placed in the stoner marker, it will be reinstalled in the exact place it is now, Allen said.

The marker is in the front yard of the home of Jack and

Jennifer Boyd.

"I am so excited," Jennifer Boyd said of her anticipation of the time capsule opening.

Attracting Oregon Trail fans

The stone marker is easy to miss but many Oregon Trail fans have no trouble finding it after reading about it in books and online. Jennifer Boyd said that in the summer five or six people a week come to her house asking about the marker.

The Oregon Trail was close to Meeker's heart because he had taken the route west from Iowa in 1852 when he was a young

man. He later settled in what is now Puyallup, Washington, and was the town's first mayor.

In the 1880s, he made and lost a fortune growing and marketing hops. Meeker then went to Alaska to look for gold, returned and experimented with dehydrated foods. He took up writing, producing at least five books before he died.

Meeker made his 1906 stop in La Grande while on an eastbound trip along the Oregon Trail in an ox-drawn wagon. He made a second trip across the trail by wagon, and still later retraced portions of it in an automobile.

At 94, he made the trip by airplane. He flew over the trail in a week. His 1852 journey took seven months.

Meeker died in December 1928, at the age of 97.

Boyd said a story from a 1906 edition of The Observer indicates that about 600 people attended the dedication ceremony for the stone marker on what is now Walnut Street. She hopes that a crowd at least that big will be present for the June 23 time capsule opening.

"Ezra Meeker would be so thrilled to know that part of the history he kept alive still excites people," she said.

SHOWERS

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dry or in moderate drought as of June 14.

Currently the fire danger ratings in Union County are low, according to the Blue Mountain Interagency Dispatch Center, and predictive fire risk levels remain normal throughout the summer for Northeastern Oregon, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

However, many of the surrounding areas have above normal potential for significant wildland fires. In the seasonal outlook, the potential for significant fires across the Pacific Northwest is normal in June, with an elevated risk forecast for Central Oregon. Moving

into July, Southeastern Oregon and Southeastern Washington join the elevated risk category. Then in August, parts of Idaho bordering Northeastern Oregon also move from normal to elevated risk.

The summer is also the burn season in Union County — a period from June 15 to Sept. 30 when controlled burnings are permitted. The Smoke Management Office oversees the agricultural burning of grass seed and cereal crop fields. Burning is done to sanitize fields from fungus diseases and weed contaminants. Weather conditions are evaluated daily and burns are only permitted on days with favorable conditions to reduce the likelihood of smoke inundating the Grande Ronde Valley.



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