

Column: ‘It’s a unique historical landmark’

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Using large digital reproductions of the 1926 black-and-white photographs unavailable in 1995, Laibinis’ crew is working to restore shading and subtlety, depth and dimension to the images, rendered in similar earth tones. The trees have more texture. The shadows stand out better. The faces of the Native Americans and white settlers are rounder and fuller.

“There’s more ‘painterliness’ to it,” Laibinis said. “The more you work on it, the more you appreciate this artist.”

Rehab

The mural’s rehab, however, is just one piece of a restoration project that got underway in March and closed the Column in June. Since then, the concrete cylinder has remained engirdled by scaffolding and — until the coastal storm of Aug. 29 — veiled by a white netting.

Engineers conducted a structural evaluation on the Column earlier this year and concluded that, for a nearly 90-year-old structure, “it’s actually in very good condition,” Laibinis said.

Subcontractors and Tongue Point Job Corps Center students have removed moss and other biological growth, filled the vertical cracks with mortar and strengthened the plaster.

They and a group of scenic artists are applying a mineral-infused primer and two coats of paint over much of the Column to help the mural better withstand the water-blast-



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Kory Sato shields the sun from the Column as she works on matching tones. Restoration workers are using black-and-white photos of the Astoria Column in order to determine the darkness values of the different paints in order to match the restoration work to the original Column design.

ing weather atop Coxcomb Hill, 600 feet above sea level. “Hopefully, this’ll last much longer,” Laibinis said.

This week, the crew hopes to finish restoring the cupola, including the replacement of four glass panes that have cracked under temperature changes and gale-force winds. A masonry firm is scheduled to repair the observation deck next week.

Though Friends of the Astoria Column initially budgeted \$1 million, the restoration may exceed that amount because of unforeseen circumstances, such as the summer storm and the need to replace the glass, Laibinis said. It is still unclear

whether the project will include restoring the plaza and installing LED lights as planned, she added.

As the finish line fast approaches, Kitty Kavanaugh, the paint manager, hand-painted the leaves on the Column’s wreath near the base *trompe l’oeil* fashion — a technique meant to fool the eye into perceiving the leaves as three-dimensional.

“We’re really gonna try to fool everybody,” Kavanaugh joked.

Time to intervene

“The most challenging part of this project is keeping everything juggling, all the different

parts, and moving forward,” said Site Manager John Goodenberger, an Astoria native and the co-founder of Clatsop Community College’s Historic Preservation program.

In addition to Goodenberger, Laibinis hired Aretta Christie, a former Astorian and Portland resident, as documentation manager in charge of gathering photographs and tracking the restoration’s progress.

The 2015 restoration is something of a reunion for the trio: Laibinis, Goodenberger and Christie were all involved in the 1995 restoration. But, this time, they have more information and better products to work with.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Travis Gustafson, a Tongue Point Job Corps student who recently completed glazing training, works on the cupola of the Astoria Column.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Brian Peterson uses the “barber pole technique,” to spread stucco along a portion of the Column which will have the sgraffito redone.

Two decades ago, roughly 80 percent of the mural had weathered off, mostly on the south and west facades. “It was just a brown pole,” Goodenberger said.

Back then, the restorers had their hands full just trying to find archival images of the Column. With so much erosion to the paint and far less available

research, the best they could do was recreate the mural in broad strokes.

Twenty years later, the harsh coastal environment had begun to take its toll, and it was time to intervene.

“It’s a unique historical landmark,” Laibinis said. “It would be a shame not to be able to preserve it.”

Counseling: ‘It seems that there’s a shortage of mental health providers’

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Astoria has one Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare counselor covering Astoria High School, Astoria Middle School and the Gray Alternative High School a total of two days a week. But the two elementary schools, which combined serve more than 800 kindergartners through fifth graders, still has no counselor on campus.

“Every week I talk to (Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare); they say they can’t find people,” Hoppes said.

Finding right fit

Michele Crump-Hart, clinical director at Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare and the head of the program embedding counselors in schools, said the agency has about 25 clients at Astor and another seven at Lewis and Clark. The families have all been contacted about the situation and are still getting

service, she said, albeit outside the school.

“We have actually offered that position throughout the summer,” she said of the elementary counselor position, adding two people so far have accepted the position and later backed out. Crump-Hart said her agency is recruiting nationwide, and hopes to find the right fit long-term.

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare also has a full-time counselor in Seaside; one at Warrenton High School funded by a state grant, another full-timer at Warrenton Grade School and another in the consortium classroom serving special needs students throughout the county. The agency sends a counselor once a week to Knappa, where they have seven clients. They also have two clients in Jewell.

Crump-Hart estimated more than 200 clients countywide, adding the number is likely to go up as the school year starts

and more children are referred.

Board member Jenna Rick-enbach reminded the school board of a new counselor in Astoria who had been approved for Oregon Health Plan members and was interested in serving students, but said he still had to go through Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare.

Shortage statewide

In an interview Thursday, Kevin Campbell, CEO of Greater Oregon Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., said his organization works with the coordinated care organization to find healthcare providers.

Campbell said Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare has historically been the provider for Oregon Health Plan members in Clatsop County because it is well-established and takes on a majority of the financial risk involved with providing healthcare. The nonprofit healthcare provider has been

operating in Clatsop County since 1963.

“It seems that there’s a huge shortage of mental health providers statewide,” Campbell said about the healthcare provider’s apparent difficulty in finding counselors.

The shortage is a result of

Oregon Health Plan membership in the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization growing from about 4,200 when it was created in 2012 to 28,000 presently, Campbell said, and there is now more money flowing toward mental healthcare.

Campbell said the coordinated care origination and Greater Oregon have money set aside to find more providers, often through primary care providers. “We’re open to expanding the provider panel anytime we can,” he said.

Shelter: An essential local resource

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Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn, interim chairman of the nonprofit’s board, said Friday morning that the 24-hour crisis line is still operating and domestic violence and sexual assault victims would have access to advocates.

“We were just as surprised as everybody else,” Schermerhorn said of the abrupt announcement about suspending services.

Schermerhorn said he has been reaching out to board members and others “trying to

figure out where we’re going to go from here.”

The Harbor is an essential resource for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in Clatsop County and often works with police and prosecutors during emergency and traumatic situations.

The nonprofit provides victims with safe housing, clothing, food, child care, transportation, and counseling.

“It disappoints me enormously,” Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis said of the uncertainty.

Marquis said the nonprofit

has had “one of the most positive relationships I’ve ever seen between an organization of that type and the law enforcement community.”

The Harbor, formerly known as the Women’s Resource Center, is in the process of moving back into a renovated Van Dusen Building on Duane Street across from City Hall. The nonprofit had operated out of the building before relocating to the Norblad Building on Duane in 2010 to contain costs.

The move to the Van Dusen Building was expected to be completed this fall.

Johnson: The Independent Party has more than 109,250 members

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policy. Two years ago, when the Senate was more narrowly split, the senator sided with Republicans on labor, environmental, gun control and voter registration issues that had been priorities for her party.

Howard Dean, the former Vermont governor and Democratic National Committee chairman, even called for Johnson’s ouster after she helped kill the voter registration bill.

But Johnson, a former state House representative

appointed to the Senate in 2005, is popular in Senate District 16 and was re-elected to a third term last November. Her district covers Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook and portions of Washington and Multnomah counties.

In March, Johnson was the only Senate Democrat to vote against a bill that provided for automatic voter registration using drivers’ license information. Gov. Brown signed the bill — similar to the one Johnson helped defeat two years before — into state law.

The Independent Party,

which qualified for major party status in August, has an agenda that calls for reducing special interest influence over government, increasing vocational training, making college more affordable, and growing business.


The party has more than 109,250 members — compared to the more than 815,050 majority Democrats — but, like third parties nationally, may have difficulty building the organizational and financial resources necessary to compete against the dominant parties.

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