

Preservation: 'We're the only hands-on program in the West Coast'

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and graduate of the program several years ago.

Standing on the spiral staircase Saturday watching his former graduate teach students was Lucien Swerdloff, the only full-time instructor for the historic preservation program.

"We're the only hands-on program in the West Coast," Swerdloff said, noting the more theoretical, classroom-based master's degree program at the University of Oregon. "There's a handful of those who do hands-on work. They're mostly on the East Coast."

Swerdloff said the program, which has 15 or so full-time students and several more part-time, relies largely on part-time instructors with specialties, such as Gustafson with windows, to teach the wide variety of courses and workshops. The historic preservation program has hands-on workshops with various local public organizations needing their old buildings restored or maintained, from the museums of the historical society to the mausoleum in the city of Astoria's Oceanview Cemetery in Warrenton, where students will help restore stained-glass windows.

For Gustafson, one of historic preservation's first graduates, teaching workshops and taking on interns is a way of paying the college back.

"I love it," he said. "I love meeting the students with their stories, and sharing my passion with them."

Also helping students at Saturday's workshop was Matthew Powers, another of Swerdloff's graduates. Four years ago, Powers helped restore a dilapidated former train depot owned by the Columbia River Maritime Museum into the Barbey Maritime Center. He also did workshops for the Clatsop County Historical Society, which owns the Flavel Museum and has recently hired him as facilities manager.



Students in Clatsop Community College historic preservation and restoration program popped out the historic sash windows on the upper turret of the Flavel House Museum during a hands-on workshop over the weekend.

"It's all preventative maintenance," Powers said of the students' workshops, which help him care for the historical society's holdings at the Carriage House and Clatsop County Heritage Center, all buildings where the preservation program has done workshops.

A new life

Elizabeth Bauer, originally from Idaho, earned a degree in elementary education from Eastern Washington University, but found teaching wasn't for her. While living in Eureka, California, she looked into a historic restoration program at the College of the Redwoods. But the program was shuttered before she could join, and Bauer headed for Astoria.

"I'm headed toward restoration of windows, and wood restoration," said Bauer, who

spent a week interning for Gustafson, repairing windows in the Cottage Grove Armory.

Like Gustafson, Bauer would like to own her own business, moving to San Jose, California, where she said historic restoration is taking off.

Bauer's story — someone changing direction in life after finding an interest in old buildings, wanting to make a more hands-on living — is similar to that of many other students in the historic preservation program. Jay Dickason, originally from Massachusetts, earned a degree in structural engineering from the University of California-Berkeley in the Bay Area, but said old construction appealed to him more than new.

"You don't find stuff being built like this anymore," Dickason said, pointing out the intricate, unique, old-growth wood-



Photos by Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Joe Cain, a historic preservation student at Clatsop Community College, prepares to strip the paint off the frame a broken window at the Flavel House Museum Saturday using boiled linseed oil and an infrared heater.

work in the Flavel Museum.

Historic preservation serves a decidedly older student population, but Swerdloff said he has multiple teenagers in his class. But then there is Don Haslan, 55, who thinks of his entrance to the historic preservation program as sort of a mid-life challenge.

"I graduated in 1979," he said. "That's the last time I was ever in an academic setting. I was in the construction trade as a plasterer, mostly up in Seattle, King County," Washington.

On a trip to Astoria, Haslan found himself in the office of the Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, where someone put him in touch with Swerdloff.

Like Dickason and other students, Haslan said he hopes to find his niche through the practical workshops unique to the college's program, while he enjoys all the memories embedded in the historic architecture.

"Once it's gone, it's gone forever," Haslan said. "Pictures can't do it."

Right to dig: Questions raised about Miller's version of events after interview

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The district's decision to do the work without contacting anyone in the Chinook Indian Nation, the Washington State Historical Society (which currently owns Middle Village), or the National Park Service (which manages it) raised serious concerns, because the site has major cultural and historical significance. The site was once a thriving Chinook trade village. Archaeologists believe the bodies of many Chinook Indians are buried close to the surface.

Conflicting accounts

"We have an easement. We have a right for (the utility poles) to be there, and we have to maintain them," Miller said in a phone interview Jan. 19. "When a pole's ready to fall on the ground we've got to do what we've got to do."

In interviews last week, however, state and federal officials provided information that raised doubts about Miller's version of events.

"The PUD let the easement for that property lapse," Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Superintendent Scott Tucker said. Tucker is acting as a liaison between PUD, federal, state and tribal authorities, as they prepare to assess the impact of the utility district's work.

Tucker said he first spoke with Miller on the morning of Jan. 19. During that conversation, Miller acknowledged that the district did not have current easements for either property.

"He confirmed when I brought it up," Tucker said. "He confirmed to me that there was no easement on the property."

Shortly after Miller and Tucker ended their call, Miller returned a series of calls and emails from a Chinook Observer reporter, and made the statement about the easement.



Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

Pacific County Public Utility District officials say that replacing this power pole caused minimal disturbance to the ground. But tribal and park officials say they still should have asked first.

Long-expired easement

"The PUD did have an easement that was granted in 1946. However, there was a term-limitation of 50 years, so it expired in 1996," Stephanie Erskine, a state Department of Enterprise Services staffer who works in the real estate division, said last week. Enterprise Services keeps track of the state's real estate transactions. Spokesman Jim Erskine noted that easements usually don't have expiration dates, so it is possible that PUD employees honestly believed they still had an easement.

"They could have thought at that time that they were OK doing that," Erskine said.

On Monday, Miller said he knew the easement had expired, but he didn't know when.

Matter of semantics?

At first, Miller suggested

that the confusion over the easement was a misunderstanding.

"I think I said I 'had' an easement. In my mind it was past-tense, and in your mind it was present-tense. It's the English language," Miller said.

When a reporter pointed out that Miller, too, had used the present-tense to describe the easement, he provided an alternate explanation.

Miller said that when concerns over access to other properties arose in the past, a utility district attorney had told PUD officials that there is a provision in state law that effectively grants access to entities that have maintained a presence on a property for a certain amount of time.

"After a period of time goes by, and there's no issue that's brought up from the parties, then you have the right to be

there and maintain the facilities," Miller said.

Miller could not immediately recall which law would guarantee the district's access in the absence of an easement, or what the legal concept he was referring to was called. He said it was simply easier to describe it to the newspaper as an "easement."

"... In my mind, the right to be there is the same as having an easement. To try to explain to the general public the words I can't think of at the time — that wouldn't look very good either," Miller explained.

Easement for the future

In an email Tuesday, Miller followed up, writing, "The words I was searching for are 'Prescriptive Easement,' essentially the same rights as an 'Easement' except not in writing."

Also Tuesday, a reporter asked Tucker if he and Miller discussed any alternate to an easement that might have guaranteed the utility district's access.

"No. We have not. I have no idea what that provision would be. I'd have to talk to our land lawyers on that one," Tucker said. "The only conversations I have had with him (since Jan. 19) is about the archeology and the need to get an easement in place with specific provisions for them."

Tucker said the utility district and state and federal officials are working on a new easement in preparation for March, when the Middle Village/Station Camp site will be handed over to the National Park Service. Federal government does not issue easements. So, "If there is not an easement in place for the land-transfer in March, there's no way for them to get an easement," Tucker said. The new easement should be complete before then, and will ensure the PUD can access Park Service land.

Port: Goal-setting workshop set for Tuesday morning

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2007 to a more tourism-centric waterfront, while the strategic plan has been geared more toward industry. He has been a proponent of going out to bid on the restaurant alone, while commissioners have floated the idea of including the Chinook Building as an option.

Hunsinger said the Port Commission voted Dec. 15 to go out to bid on the restaurant. The commission made a motion to that effect, but it failed because of a tie, after Hunsinger and Port Commission Chairman Robert Mushen voted yes; John Raichl and James Campbell voted no, wanting an option for the Chinook Building included; and Stephen Fulton passed.

Knight said the Port's strategic plan dictates another direction than the Port Commission has talked about.

Gary Kobes, a contractor hired by the Port to manage the Astoria Regional Airport, was presented Tuesday because of his expertise in developing projects with government entities.

"When developing a property as an entity offering, there's a lot of information that needs to be known," Kobes said. "If owner doesn't know basic information, he'll find out down the road as developer discovers it, generally to the detriment of the owner."

Kobes showed a map of a development area stretching around the West End Mooring Basin from the Astoria Bridge to Pier 1. In the middle was

the restaurant and Chinook Building. If the Port focuses on the restaurant, he said, it erodes the ability to maximize larger uses in the district.

To mitigate the Port's risk on offering the property, he said, the agency needs a legal description of the property, overwater lease issues with the state, environmental surveys, geotechnical surveys, utility locations, rights of way, a traffic study, archaeological studies and other information. The Port needs that information before offering a property, he said, and the lion's share will involve the city.

Knight brought in Kevin Cronin, Astoria's new community development director, to explain the benefits of the master planning process.

"When you're talking about master planning, you're talking about improving investor confidence and confidence in capital markets," Cronin said. "That's why you spend the time doing master planning. I strongly encourage it."

The city has significant resources in the Astor-West Urban Renewal District with which to partner with the Port, he said, but wants to see a master plan first.

"If you go through a master planning process, it makes the entire process of developing property easier," Cronin said, adding he can provide technical assistance as the Port develops such a master plan.

Knight said the Port Commission will start the process Tuesday, when they meet from 8 a.m. to noon in a goal-setting workshop.

Pot: Bill would reduce the risk and liability to financial institutions

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The bill by Rep. Tobias Read, D-Beaverton, also allows the Oregon Liquor Control Commission and the Oregon Health Authority to provide financial institutions with confidential information on license and permit holders in the marijuana industry. The information would otherwise be exempt from public disclosure.

OLLC regulates recreational pot, while the Oregon Health Authority oversees the medical program.

Read said the bill would reduce the risk and liability to financial institutions and direct the Department of Consumer and Business Services to study other ways to overcome obstacles to accessing financial services.

"The voters of Oregon decided we were going to proceed with the legalizing of marijuana and cannabis businesses, and I think it's clear that however one feels about that, that presents a number of problems," Read said. "We can all agree that duffels full of cash are not a good thing."

Maps Credit Union in Salem already provides some financial services to cannabis dispensaries, said Kevin Cole, the institution's chief financial officer.

Cole said the bill is "a first step towards normalizing credit union services for licensed cannabis dispensaries."

The legislation still can't protect banks and credit unions from lawsuits leveraging federal statutes against organized crime. Such lawsuits have sought to stop the cannabis industry in other states such as Colorado.

The Legislature passed a resolution last year urging Congress to lift restrictions on providing financial services to the marijuana industry and to declassify marijuana as a Schedule I drug. That classification is defined as the most dangerous drugs at high risk for abuse in the Controlled Substance Act of 1970.

Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, and Rep. Earl Perlmutter, D-Colorado, last year introduced the Marijuana Businesses Access to Banking Act to allow legal marijuana businesses to access banking services. The legislation found some support in the House but has yet to receive any action in the Senate.

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