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# WEEKEND BREAK



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THE ASTORIAN • SATURDAY, JULY 3, 2021 • B1



## A NEW HISTORY

### The Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum returns with new features, free admission

By RAY GARCIA  
For The Astorian

After closing in March 2020, only to reopen in October, then close once again, the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum is back in action.

The museum will officially welcome back patrons starting Wednesday after a year-and-a-half of forced closures, staff changes and renovations — including a major overhaul of the museum's galleries and exhibits.

"We're reopening to kind of an entirely new experience, one that people will remember," said Madeline Moore, the museum's executive director.

As an added bonus, admission to the museum is free until the end of the year, thanks to the donations from museum members and the Port of Ilwaco.

At the end of every year, the museum's staff usually invites its members to donate for a specific project that's occurring at the time. This year, the museum asked donors to help make the museum free for visitors through 2021.

"The response was really great and people were really excited to donate," Moore said. "They wanted (others) to be able to come to the museum and not have to worry about paying a fee."

#### What's new

During its shuttered state, the museum saw its period of inactivity as an opportunity to improve its space and the content within it. One of the first projects completed included installing a new roof — a task that had been on museum staff's to-do list for around 10 years, Moore said.

"We have been able to do all of these projects that have been on the back burner for many years, and that's been a pretty big boon to us," she said.

Due to severe water damage from a storm that took place in January 2020, the Village Gallery received a make-over using the funds from an insurance claim. From repainting the entire gallery to putting in a new floor, the museum staff aimed to restore and freshen up the gallery's space.

"We kind of reconfigured (the gallery) and moved a bunch of exhibits around, and opened up a lot of space in there so that we can display some new things that weren't on display before we did the

remodel," Moore said.

The Chinook Gallery, Resource Gallery and Life Saving Gallery also received new flooring and have been refreshed with some new content.

A new addition to the museum is a special exhibit called, "Black & White and Read All Over: Local Photographs and the Stories They Tell."

Throughout the pandemic, the museum's staff kept busy by finding photographs within the museum's collection, then researching the backstory of the photos and sharing the findings on social media. After the posts gained considerable engagement online, the museum's staff decided to create an exhibit featuring 25 of the most liked posts from the project.

"Some of these had like huge reaches of over tens of thousands of people, which was something that we had never experienced before with our social media reach," Moore said.

The special exhibit will be available until Sept. 11.

#### Keeping legacies alive

In many ways, rural museums and cultural centers act as the heart of their communities. They preserve important artifacts from the past, but also work to tell the stories of those who came before.

"There are many generations of the same family living in this community that have been here since it was founded, and Indigenous communities as well," Moore said. "So we are really responsible for making sure that those legacies live on and that they're able to be taught and shared with other people."

As the staff at the museum prepare for its grand reopening, Moore said they feel blessed to have been able to use the closure as a means of revamping the space and what it offers. However, it also reminded Moore of how the pandemic caused the closure of many museums and cultural centers across the nation, with more predicted to follow.

"To see where we are on very stable facilities and a new exhibit for people to see, coming out of a global pandemic, is pretty impressive and something that we're very proud of."

Ray Garcia is a contributor for The Astorian and Coast Weekend.



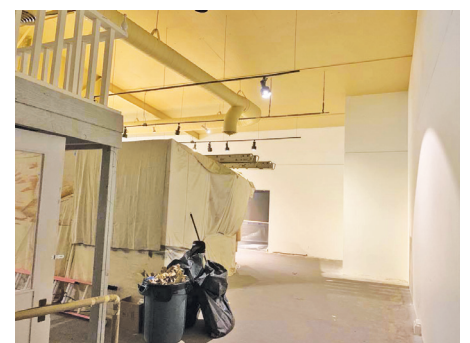
TOP: Members of the Ilwaco Volunteer Fire Department install a historic sign for one of the galleries. ABOVE: Some of the museum's new exhibits offer a window into the past.



A look at a new wall of historic signage from local businesses on the Long Beach Peninsula.



A linotype machine sits in one of the new exhibits in the Village Gallery.



The Village Gallery undergoes a remodel.