

Pandemic has hurt La Grande's Liberty Theatre restoration

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Two years ago, Ashley O'Toole, chair of the Liberty Theatre Foundation's board, saw a light burning brightly on the near horizon.

O'Toole believed restoration of the Liberty Theatre, which started about a decade ago, would be complete by the end of 2020. Almost all of the funding needed to complete the project was in place and a building contractor and subcontractors were set to complete work.

Then the coronavirus pandemic hit.

The pandemic stalled completion of much of the venue's restoration work, creating supply chain issues that made it much more difficult to get the necessary supplies and materials.

What has really made the situation worse is the price of many materials skyrocketed due to inflation.

"Some materials cost four or five times more than they did before the pandemic," O'Toole said.

This perfect storm of circumstances means the Liberty renovation project is set back considerably. O'Toole said if the restoration is to be completed this year, the project must raise \$600,000.



Ashley O'Toole, chair of the Liberty Theatre Foundation's board, checks on the ongoing renovation of La Grande's historic venue on March 7, 2022.

"Had it not been for the pandemic and the price increases, the theater would be open now," he said. Unfortunately, that is not

the case, which is why a capital campaign is being organized for the final phase of restoration for the Liberty Theatre. O'Toole said the

objective of the campaign is to raise \$350,000 in private donations and \$250,000 in state and private grants by July 1.

"If we can close the fund-

ing gap by then, the theater will be open this year," O'Toole said.

The historic venue was built around 1910 and

first named The Arcade. It became known as the Liberty Theatre about 1930 after being remodeled. It then operated through 1959. The theater was closed from public view for about the next 50 years before the renovation project started.

Major work completed during the past six months includes the restoration of the theater's more than 100-year-old chandelier. The chandelier, which cost \$10,000, features 42 lights.

The framework for a ticket booth also has been installed between a pair of double twin doors, exactly where it was located in 1930.

"We are recreating the classic vaudeville entrance," O'Toole said.

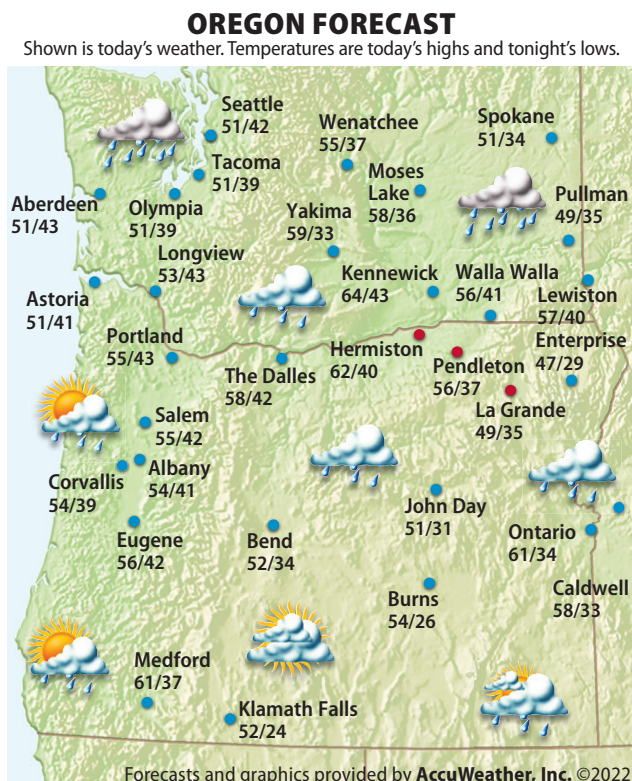
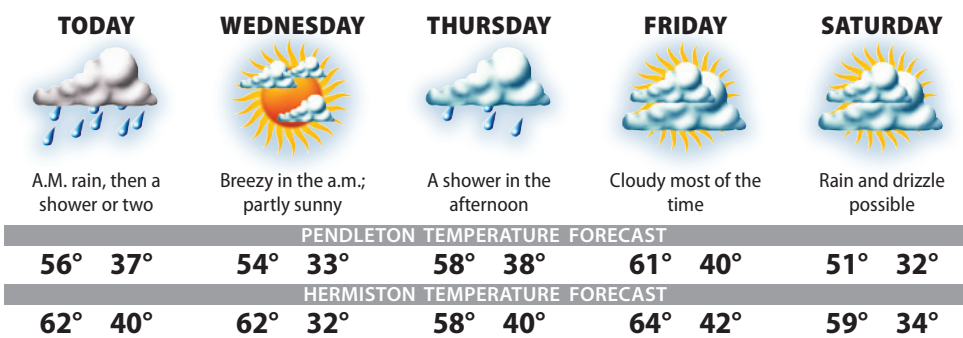
Other work still underway includes major plumbing, electrical and ventilation and heating projects. O'Toole said workers have accomplished more the past six months than during any other periods during restoration of the venue.

"It is exciting to see us reaching major milestones frequently," he said.

Although much work remains to be done, O'Toole is excited about the strides that have been made recently.

"I am having to use my imagination less and less to visualize what it will look like," he said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	59°	40°
Normals	56°	35°
Records	80° (1934)	11° (1906)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.02"
Month to date	0.64"
Normal month to date	0.57"
Year to date	3.08"
Last year to date	3.06"
Normal year to date	3.26"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	60°	43°
Normals	59°	33°
Records	79° (1934)	10° (1944)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.62"
Normal month to date	0.34"
Year to date	1.68"
Last year to date	1.65"
Normal year to date	2.34"

WINDS (in mph)

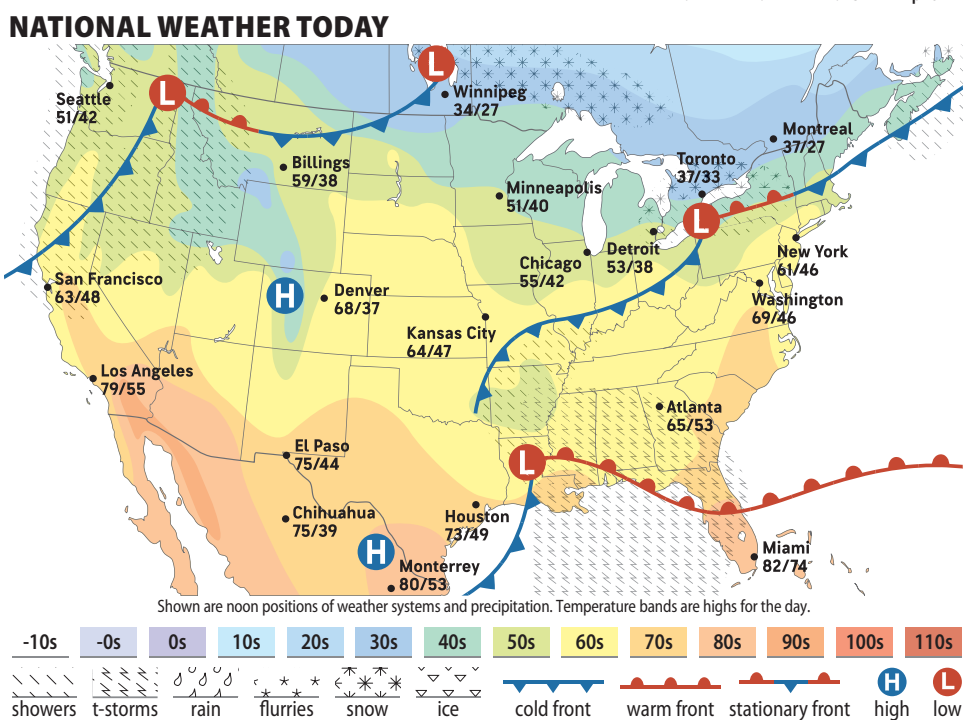
Today	Wed.
Boardman WSW 10-20	WSW 8-16
Pendleton W 10-20	W 8-16

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:08 a.m.
Sunset tonight	7:01 p.m.
Moonrise today	4:12 p.m.
Moonsset today	6:29 a.m.

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 88° in Cotulla, Texas Low -9° in Crane Lake, Minn.



Baker Heritage Museum gearing up for an anticipated busier 2022

By LISA BRITTON
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Tour groups are starting to call the Baker Heritage Museum — something that hasn't happened much in the past two years.

Lynn Weems, who started as director of the museum in December 2021, anticipates this coming summer to be a bit more normal — closer to pre-pandemic attendance.

The museum, at 2480 Grove St., Baker City, just east of Geiser-Pollman Park, opens for the season April 8.

Hours will be 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Admission is \$9 adults (13 and older), \$8 seniors, \$5 ages 6-12, and free for ages 5 and younger.

For \$16, visitors can tour both the museum and the Adler House, which is open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Admission to just the Adler House is the same as the museum rates.

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive

Center is setting up a presence at the museum while the center on Flagstaff Hill is closed for renovation.

The Interpretive Center, which will unveil exhibits in May, will have displays in the Leo Adler Room on the first floor, and occupy about a third of the ballroom upstairs — including a full-size wagon.

'Extraordinary Women' exhibit

The exhibit "Extraordinary Women of Baker County" continues this season. Weems said they decided to extend it for a year longer than originally planned. A display about the Chinese presence in Baker County will open in 2023.

Weems said the "Extraordinary Women" display has been redesigned and updated. "We added some things," she said.

For example, the section dedicated to Phyllis Badgley now features several of her original pressed flower cards.

Another addition came when Weems received a phone call from a woman who wanted to donate a friendship quilt made by members of the Baker City

Methodist Church that includes 130 stitched names.

"One of them happened to be Myrtle Lee," Weems said.

Lee, who became superintendent of Baker schools in 1943, is included in the exhibit. The quilt is on display near her section.

Other featured females include Johanna Packwood, who arrived in Auburn as a schoolteacher in 1862, and Nellie McCarty, who participated in four bank robberies between 1891 and 1892 with the McCarty Gang.

Volunteer support

The museum is supported by the Friends of the Baker Heritage Museum, a volunteer group that raises money for exhibits, maintenance and other needs.

Weems said volunteers are also needed for daily activities inside the museum.

"We have jobs for everyone," she said.

Anyone interested in getting involved can call the museum at 541-523-9308.

Updates on events are posted on the Facebook page, or check these websites: www.bakerheritagemuseum.com or www.friendsofbakerheritagemuseum.com.

IN BRIEF

Plane lands in Ladd Canyon after power failure

LA GRANDE — The pilot of a small plane made an emergency landing Thursday, March 10, on the southeast edge of Ladd Canyon on Interstate 84.

Portland pilot Brian Moentenich, 74, made the landing after his plane lost power at an altitude of 8,000 feet, according to Lt. Daniel Conner of the Oregon State Police. The plane landed safely at about 2 p.m. in the west-bound lanes of I-84 about 14 miles southeast of La Grande.

"He had to land between semis," Conner said.

Some truck drivers, Conner said, pulled their vehicles off to the side of the freeway to allow the plane space to land.

Soon after landing, an aircraft mechanic was brought in to repair the engine. Once the mechanic's work was completed the pilot and his passenger, Elizabeth-Anne Hall, 68, of Portland, took off from the same stretch of freeway. The Oregon Department of Transportation slowed traffic on the interstate to create space for the plane to taxi, Conner said.

Hall and Moentenich were not injured, and Conner said they were appreciative of the help they were receiving from OSP and the ODOT.

— EO Media group

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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