

History center celebrates 20th year with open house

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The Wallowa History Center is closing in on its 20th anniversary celebration, and will be hosting an open house in celebration on the Fourth of July.

The celebration will take place in conjunction with the town's Fourth of July Parade at the home of the center at the corner of 1st and Madison streets in Wallowa, the former home of the U.S. Forest Service station.

The open house will feature displays and give visitors an opportunity to look at the location that will be in the process of being converted into a library, interpretive center and more in the next few years.

"We have a brochure. You can read the brochure (and) do a tour of the facility up there," center director Mary Ann Burrows said.

The center has undergone a lot of growth since its beginning 20 years ago. Burrows said it started with not much more than a display board that was set up at the Wallowa County Library.

"We really started out on



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

This building at the home of the Wallowa History Center will eventually be converted into an interpretive center.

the Fourth of July with one of our first displays," she said. "We had a presentation board with materials in the library, and just moved

on from there. We got a 501(c)3 to buy a computer and some materials."

David Weaver, president of the board for the center,

credited both Burrows and Mark Highberger for their efforts in growing the center.

"They started out really small and have moved

around overtime previously before landing here," he said, "and kind of really expanding the work they have done. Both Mark and

Mary Ann are really instrumental. ... Mary Ann is the heart of the organization. It was her inspiration that got it going, and she knows a ton about Wallowa County history."

Part of what got Burrows started building up the center was seeing a loss of town history.

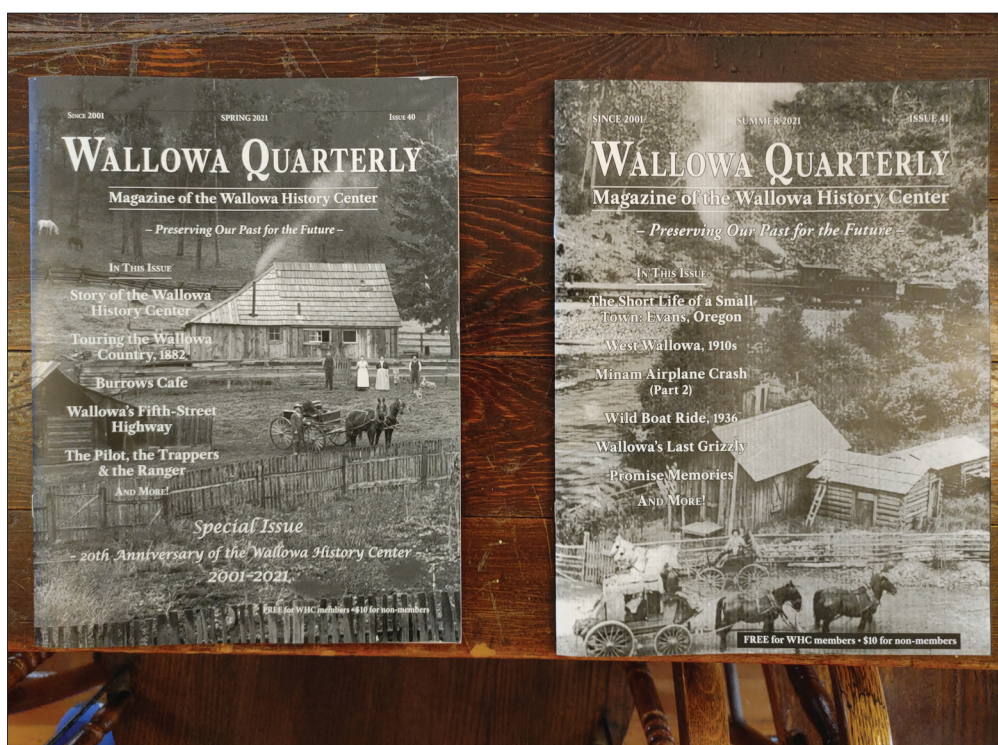
"There were so many of the older families that were leaving. Nothing was being saved," she said. "I've always been a history buff. I hated to see the history of the town disappearing."

Highberger said Burrows would gather information and track down old photographs of the area. She even salvaged archivable items that were being thrown away.

"She did that by going through archives, talking to people, rescuing a lot of material from places like the city dump," he said.

Many of the items the center has collected over the past 20 years will be on display when the new center is complete.

But on this Fourth of July, visitors will get to see what the future holds for a place designed to preserve the past.



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Shown are the covers of the first two editions of the Wallowa Quarterly, a new magazine put out by the Wallowa History Center. The center's newsletter was essentially converted into the new publication.

History center's newsletter is now Wallowa Quarterly

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — For years, the Wallowa History Center produced a newsletter that shared information about the past of the town.

It now has a completely new look — and a new name.

The Wallowa Quarterly made its debut earlier this year. The glossy-paper magazine is an expansion upon the efforts made by history center Director Mary Ann Burrows, and still includes many of her latest finds for the center.

"Mary Ann turned out the first newsletter. Membership was only \$5 a year, but members weren't really getting anything, they were just giving," said Mark Highberger, the magazine's editor and publisher. "We wanted to be able to spread the word that we were providing this service."

The first newsletter Burrows produced came out in 2003, two years after the center was formed, and contained old photos and other information collected by Burrows for the center.

"It was a four-page photo-copy one that was mailed out

to members," Highberger said. "The newsletter just started to evolve, but was always between four to eight pages, off a photocopier."

In all, 39 editions of the newsletter were produced over the last 18 years. But with the 20th anniversary of the center approaching, there was a feeling that it was time for more.

After some studying to find the right printing company, the newsletter was transformed.

"The first one came out in March, and we just received from the printer yesterday the second copy," Highberger said during a Thursday, May 27, interview.

It's at least double the size of the newsletter. The first edition of the Quarterly — the 40th overall — was 16 pages, and edition No. 41 was expanded to 20 pages. Inside, it consists of photographs, maps, stories and more.

"It depends on one, what catches my interest, but two, what Mary Ann gives me," Highberger said of deciding on the content. "Not very much time goes by, and she'll come up with a gem."

"That will lead to a story, depending on how much

material I can get on it. The history center has a digital online archive of all the historical newspapers. It goes back to the 1870s."

The latest edition has a piece about a now-defunct town that once stood north of Lostine.

"The current one has a lead story about a town called Evans," Highberger said.

Burrows said she was more than pleased with the effort Highberger put into the Quarterly.

"I think it's wonderful. I'm very pleased with the Quarterly," she said. "And we have had great response for it, too. Mark is such a good writer. We worked together earlier, he printed some little books. ... I really like it. I think it's wonderful."

The cost of a membership has doubled — \$10 now as opposed to \$5, but that includes getting the Quarterly delivered four times a year. The magazine itself sells for \$10.



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

There already are some items in place in what will be the research library for the Wallowa History Center.

History center's vision for a new home coming to fruition

Site, exhibit plan for the center should be in place by July 1

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The Wallowa History Center's vision for its new home is moving closer to reality.

Board President David Weaver said last week the center will have its site plan and exhibit plan for the four-building home of the center at 1st and Madison streets in Wallowa by next month, and at that point, they can move to the next step of restoring the old Forest Service buildings and converting them into a history hub.

"By July 1, we'll have all those products, and then we'll start chipping away at moving forward with that bigger plan," Weaver said. "It's a long-term process. We'll start looking at which pieces we want to tackle, and start the capital fundraising. We're four to five years out. So we'll start doing some of the identified restoration work."

The center began leasing the property — which includes four buildings — from the city about three or four years ago, Weaver said. Previously, it had been deeded to the Forest Service.

"This was the Bear-Sled Ranger District," Weaver said.

Among the features of the center's home once it is complete will be a research library for individuals to dig — both online and through print resources — through history of the city. There also will be an interpretive center.

For now, though, getting some of the basics taken care of on-site is the focus.

"The stages that we have been in now, we sort of have the collection moved in there and set up shop for that, and did the electrical work, and the plumbing work, installation (and a) new exterior window," Weaver said of the building that previously served as the ranger's office and

will be where the research library is.

Weaver said the hope is that when the center is complete, Weaver said it will be a location that doesn't take away from the Wallowa County Museum, but that makes photos, artifacts and more accessible.

"Our plan is basically to have a timeline around Wallowa history in this building centered around natural resources," he said. "It won't be a museum, because we already have a good museum, and it's great up there."

Mary Ann Burrows, the center's director, in addition to having a location for history memorabilia, wants to see the buildings restored to what they once were.

"The house is in really bad shape," she said. "It is going to take multiple years to complete the project because there is so much work that needs to be done. It's an addition to our area for people that are interested in history."

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