

Author chronicles an era when artists ruled the coast

By **NANCY MCCARTHY**
Coast Weekend

With its fabled scenery, Cannon Beach has always attracted artists. But when hippies began showing up with canvases, crafts and cameras in the 1960s, residents worried they would ruin the town.

“In the late ‘60s, early ‘70s, it was a time of culture clash. Cannon Beach at that time was very conservative,” said Rainmar Bartl, whose new book, “The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Cannon Beach,” chronicles the era between 1960 and 1985 when Cannon Beach was a true artists’ colony. “The city fathers in those days were freaked out by all of these young hippies coming to town.”

Despite residents’ fears, however, the arts focus became what then-Mayor Gerald Gower called the “most wonderful thing that ever happened to Cannon Beach.”

Bartl, a retired city planner who moved to Cannon Beach in the 1970s and observed the village’s evolution as a close-knit artistic community, tried to capture that history before it was too late.

“It was a special time in Cannon Beach; I thought there should be a record of it,” Bartl said. “Some of our



John Mersereau

A 1978 photo features a group of Cannon Beach artists at a moment author Rainmar Bartl describes as “when the arts in Cannon Beach were at their fullest expression.”

friends started getting sick and dying, and I thought, ‘Now’s the time.’”

The book consists of short biographies and photos of 111 artists who spent time in Cannon Beach. It also describes 61 galleries and studios — ranging from a gas station annex to the White Bird Gallery, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Colored plates of some artists’ works are included as well.

In addition to interviewing artists, Bartl perused 25 years of local newspapers, including the Cannon Beach

Gazette and Seaside Signal. Bartl included stories about artists and their exhibits in the book.

The reasons artists descended on the town are as diverse as the artists themselves. Painter and sculptor Jane Horns, a Portland Museum Art School student, visited the area on a field trip in 1964. Horns was stranded when the school bus left without her — so she found a \$25 room in Cannon Beach.

She spent the summer exhibiting her work in the M&M Building, home

to numerous art galleries through the years. The building now houses the Sesame and Lilies store.

Painter Steve McLeod rode his motorcycle to Cannon Beach during a cross-country tour in 1970 and became one of Cannon Beach’s beloved residents until his death in 2015.

Frank Lackaff visited his family’s cabin in 1960 and eventually opened the Sketch Pad Gallery at a gas station. He later renovated a building on Hemlock Street into a home and gallery, and sold that to artists Harry and

Hanne Greaver, who still operate the gallery.

Jim Hannen decided to open a stained glass studio in 1975 in Cannon Beach after a visit. In those days, an artist could rent a place large enough to live and work in for \$50 a month.

“I thought what a cool thing it would be to live in Cannon Beach and have a shop in Cannon Beach,” said Hannen, who still lives in the area and sells his glasswork. “It was such a different town. There was something kind of dreamy about it.”

Bartl also tells the story of Joe Police, a metal sculptor who became Cannon Beach’s mayor. Police was commissioned to do a sculpture of Sacajawea at the then-new Breakers Point condominium development. Police died in 1980 before he started the sculpture. His wife, Pat Egan Police, completed it with the community’s help.

“There was a lot of creative energy,” Bartl said. “There were a lot of reasonably young people starting out their lives and careers, and they had ideas. They were different from 1950s, early ‘60s mainstream ideas, and it created something. It wasn’t just in the arts. There was a revolution in what kind of town we should be and how we get there.”

When Portland State University opened the Haystack Summer Arts Program in 1969, Cannon Beach became an even greater draw for artists and visitors from throughout the U.S. The program, which continued for more than 30 years, impacted the village economically and culturally.

But those early days were special, Bartl said, because the arts were “woven into the community.”

“That was the best time in Cannon Beach, there’s no doubt about it. I think it was a special time, I really do,” he said.

In Seaside, the Promenade turns 100

By **GRIFFIN REILLY**
The Astorian

In 1921, hundreds of Oregonians gathered to open the Promenade, a 1.5-mile boardwalk that would become a staple of the North Coast. The mayor hoped the future would bring hundreds, if not thousands, of visitors.

A hundred years later, that vision is reality.

Coming amid a cautious recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, the Aug. 7 celebration honoring the centennial anniversary will serve as an opportunity for

locals to showcase their pride in what has become one of the most popular tourism destinations on the coast.

“It’s the most important thing to the town,” said Laurie Mespelt, the executive director of the Seaside Downtown Development Association. “That is who we are, that Turnaround and the Promenade — it’s who we are and it’s what brings people here.”

The Seaside Visitors Bureau has been promoting the anniversary throughout the year. Of the \$400,000 budget the city receives to promote tourism, funded by

local lodging taxes, Joshua Heineman, the director of tourism marketing for the visitors bureau, estimates the bulk of it went to promoting the anniversary.

“Everything was pointed at the centennial,” he said.

The primary component of the campaign is a 32-page booklet that can be picked up for free at the visitors bureau. The booklet, Heineman said, features scavenger hunts, stickers, entrances to sweepstakes and other ways for visitors to interact with the Prom.

He recalls seeing a group of visitors from a recent event at the Seaside

Civic and Convention Center out on the Prom following guides and activities in the book. “It was good to see people taking advantage of it and having a smile on their face as they look through the book and remember all the times they came here with their families and things like that,” he said.

Evoking that sense of nostalgia, he said, is the biggest goal of the centennial. In a collaboration with the Seaside Museum & Historical Society, the Seaside Public Library has a collection of classic photos of the Prom over the years

on display.

“That’s the history right there,” Mespelt said. “It’s one thing to look at period pieces, but those are true snapshots.”

A parade will showcase many of the businesses and organizations that have helped promote Seaside, such as the Rotary Club, representatives from the Miss Oregon pageant and Portland’s Royal Rosarians.

Regional dignitaries, such as state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, will make speeches commemorating the Prom just as Gov. Ben Olcott did a century ago.

Later in the day, officials will bury a time capsule near the Turnaround to be opened in 2121.

City Councilor Steve Wright, the president of the historical society, echoes the words of officials who commemorated the boardwalk and welcomed visitors a century before him. He hopes the Prom will forever remain a playground for the town and the Pacific Northwest as a whole.

“It’s free, once you’re here. It’s an attraction. You don’t have to pay an annual pass for it, or pay for a daily. It’s just there to enjoy,” he said.

Bookmobile: Builds vocabulary, expands perspectives

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districts statewide for summer educational and recreational programs for students in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The school district’s bookmobile kicked off July 5 and will run through Sept. 2. Each week, the bookmobile spends from noon to 2 p.m. Tuesdays at the city park in Cannon Beach; from 1 to 2 p.m. at Broadway Park and 2:15 to 3:15 p.m. at Cartwright Park in Seaside on Wednesdays; and from 1 to 2 p.m. at Gearhart City Hall and from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Cul-laby Lake Boat Ramp on Thursdays.

All children are welcome to stop by and select a book. There are materials tailored

for every age group, from preschool to high school. Students also don’t have to attend a Seaside school in order to pick out a free book.

“With all the setbacks from COVID at the school, any chance kids can have to read a little more on their own will assist with their educational experience,” said James Downes, a teacher assistant at Pacific Ridge Elementary School, who helps run the bookmobile at the Gearhart locations.

Mejia was equally appreciative of what the bookmobile has to offer students this summer. When the school district asked for volunteers to help work the program, she enthusiastically signed up.

“This is a great way for our kids to want to learn and want to read over the summer,” she said.

Even if the material isn’t necessarily academic, reading in and of itself has numerous educational benefits. And it can also pique continued interest in learning new information.

“Anywhere that you start is a good start,” Mejia said.

Downes shared a similar sentiment about the importance of keeping students learning and engaged through reading over the summer.

“It builds their jargon, their vocabulary, helps them understand different ways of thinking and perspectives, and all of that blends into bigger-picture ideas,” he said.



Katherine Lacaze

Brothers Isair (right) and Zander Leon-Mejia help their mom Daffne Mejia (not pictured) at the Seaside School District Bookmobile.



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