



WHITMAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 52, No. 6— Nov./Dec. 2025

Alex Otero Named WCHS “Volunteer of the Year”

Alex Otero (Colfax), director of the Whitman County Historical Society Archive in Pullman, was recognized as WCHS’s “Volunteer of the Year” at the Society’s Annual Meeting in



President Mark Clinton presenting Alex’s award.

Endicott on October 19. “In an unbelievably short time Alex went above and beyond in moving the records in the Archive in the Gladish Building to the lower level of the Congregational Church,” said the Society’s director **Valoree Gregory**. When the tenants of Gladish were given only two weeks to vacate the building, Alex flew into action. He helped find a new location and worked with the movers—as well as by himself, personally moving many artifacts to storage in Steptoe. “We never could have gotten moved in time without Alex,” said Val. Alex welcomes users to visit the new location in the church, in Suite 102 (accessible from Ruby Street) on Wednesdays 9:00 AM to noon or by appointment.

Alex supervises a crew of six volunteers at the Archive. On Saturdays he also volunteers at the Print Museum in Palouse, where he is compiling a database of Colfax newspapers, many of which were damaged in the 1996 flood. Museum director **Janet Barstow** says she very much appreciates that he frequently steps in as a docent when needed.

Director Sought for the Perkins House

With the recent resignation of Rhoda Penwell, the WCHS Board of Directors is looking for someone to replace her. Do you like old houses and vintage furniture? Giving tours

of beautiful spaces? Decorating for major holidays? Supervising enthusiastic volunteers? If so, this could be the perfect volunteer activity for you! If interested, contact Valoree Gregory at wchsdirector1@gmail.com or 509-553-9729.



...at the Perkins House

December 6, 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
623 Perkins Ave., Colfax

As part of Colfax's annual Winterfest—which features a parade and a host of other holiday activities—the Perkins House will be decorated in Victorian style and open to visitors. Free cookies and hot beverages will be available, along with festive holiday music.



...in the PDHC Freight Room

December 6, 13, and 20,
1:00 to 4:00 PM

Once again, the Pullman Depot Heritage Center will be hosting its annual Train Car Holiday Bazaar on Saturday afternoons in December. This year, the bazaar will be held in the Freight Room because of work being done to the train car and caboose. Local crafters and Depot volunteers will be offering handmade gifts and ornaments, among other things. All proceeds this year will go to the restoration of the passenger car.



Upcoming PDHC Workshop: “How to Apply for the Pullman Register of Historic Places”

by **Kathleen Ryan**

330 N. Grand Ave., in the Freight Room
Thursday, Nov. 20, 7:00 - 8:00 PM

The City of Pullman will present a workshop on how to fill out the form for listing a property on the local register. It will feature a real-life example of a historic property and explore the history of the Rico's building in downtown Pullman.

Update on PDHC Railcar Restoration, by Debbie Sherman

Preliminary work on the railcars at the Pullman Depot Heritage Center has been paused due to weather constraints, according to **John-Mark Mahnkey**, rolling stock chairperson.



Unforeseen complications arose that slowed paint removal from the cars, and applying new paint during colder months does not produce an optimum finish. Work will resume in the spring when the tenting will be removed, said Mahnkey. The coach will be restored to its original Northern Pacific color scheme, while the caboose will sport the Burlington Northern palette.

Fundraising continues this fall and winter to pay for the cars' restoration. Some naming rights and sponsorships are still available to replace the current coach windows with more accurately styled windows. The sponsorships are priced at \$1,000, and your gifts are tax deductible. For further information, please contact Debbie Sherman at 50-334-7389.

Upgrades at the Perkins House Are Finished!

by Val Gregory

Painting and repairs at the Perkins house are finished! Work began in early August and ended in October. In addition to paint, spindles and some of the ornate trim were replaced and/or repaired, and cracks were sealed. The balcony railings were also repaired. The project cost approximately \$100,000. Seventy-five percent of that has been raised, but a little more help is needed. You can give through the qr code below, or you can donate by mail to WCHS, PO Box 67, Colfax WA 9911.

**SUPPORT YOUR
LOCAL
HISTORY**

Perkins House operates on donations.
We appreciate your generosity!

<https://whitman-county-historical-society.squarespace.com/>

Become a member
of the Whitman
County Historical
Society, or scroll
down the page
to support your
favorite projects
directly!



!! THANK YOU !!



WCHS Archive Move Finished!

Summarized from an article in the WCGS Newsletter by **Sue Kreikemeier**

After 38 years in the Gladish Community Building in Pullman (beginning in June of 1987), WCHS was forced to move its Archive to a new location. In a letter dated August 28, 2025, Gladish tenants were given until Sept. 15 (when the electricity was turned off) to vacate the premises, so that the building can be sold. In only a little over two weeks, a new location was found. The move—to the basement of the Community Congregational United Church of Christ, 525 NE Campus Street in Pullman—was completed by Sept 18, and the Archive reopened only two weeks later.



The Whitman County Genea-logical Society also made the move, as it had been sharing space with WCHS since 1992, paying about thirty percent of the rent. WCHS and WCGS have separate but adjoining rooms at CCUCC, and they will be open for the same hours that they maintained in the Gladish Building: Wednesday mornings from 9:00 AM to noon and by appointment. If you need an appointment, contact the WCHS Archivist Alex Otero at 253-536-7350 or text WCGS President Sue Kreikemeier at 509-595-3307.

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with the move!

New Exhibit at the Depot

Jamie Whitman, Karla Dolph, and Debbie Sherman have put together a colorful and interesting exhibit on the Washington State University Marching Band. Founded in 1899, today the Cougar Marching Band has over 200 members from nearly 70 different majors. It performs at games and parades, at home and away. In 1987, it even traveled to Tokyo.



As this newsletter has now covered all the historical museums in Whitman County that are properties of WCHS, as well as those that are not, it will now branch out into historical museums in adjoining counties, beginning with Asotin County. See the next page.



Featured Museum:

Asotin County Historical Society Museum

address: 215 Filmore, Asotin, WA 99402

phone: 509-243-4659

e-mail: asotinmuseum@asotin.com

webpage: www.asotincountymuseum.com

hours: Tues. – Sat., 1:00 – 5:00 PM

The museum's cement-block main building was constructed in 1920 for use as a funeral parlor. Later the facility was donated by its owners, the Merchant family, to be used as a museum. In 1972, it officially became the Asotin County Historical Society Museum. It also houses the Asotin County Historical Society Archive.

In addition to the main building, the property is home to several other buildings, including a barn, blacksmith shop, pioneer home, school, and shepherders shack—as well as a river boat. Each is with artifacts, and some of the buildings are constructed with square nails. According to the Museum's advertising, visitors will “experience the frontier as settlers did!”

The Museum is open from March to October. Tours are by appointment. The staff recommends calling before you come, and making an appointment for a tour is recommended.



Janet Barstow (Palouse) retired as the secretary of the WCHS Board of Directors last spring, a position she had held for many years. She has also been in charge of the Roy Chatters Newspaper and Print Museum in Palouse for 25 years and continues in that position.

She is largely responsible for rallying the people of Palouse around the Print Museum—especially restoring and repairing it—after massive damage caused by the Palouse River flood of 1996.



WCHS is not her only volunteer activity. Janet is a founding member of Haunted Palouse, which began as a fund raiser to complete repairs to Print Museum after the flood. Another community project dear to her heart is the Palouse Community Center, where she was a long-time member of the Board. Both projects were funded in part by Haunted Palouse, on whose Board she remained until the project was completed. She and her husband Ben are also members of the Palouse Chamber of Commerce.

Janet clearly loves Palouse, where she has lived nearly all her life. After graduating from Palouse High School, she attended the University of Idaho and graduated from Purdue University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Communications. She and Ben have two children and five grandchildren. The Barstows own and operate Turnbow Flat Farm, which was established in 1883 by Janet's paternal ancestors.

When asked why she devotes so much of her time to volunteer for WCHS, Janet said that running the print museum as a volunteer is “my gift to my town.”

2025 Calendar

Nov. 19	WCHS Executive Meeting, 6:00 PM, Pullman Depot Freight Room
Nov. 19	PDHC Steering Committee Meeting, 7:00, Pullman Depot Freight Room
Nov. 20	PalousePeople: “How to Apply for the Pullman Register of Historic Places”
Dec. 6	Perkins House Holiday Open House, Colfax, 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Dec. 6, 13, 20	Train Car Holiday Bazaar, 1:00 to 4:00 PM, Pullman Depot
Dec. 18	WCHS Board Meeting, Zoom

Please Renew Your Membership! If you haven’t done so already, please respond to the membership renewal request you may have recently received in the mail. Or, consider membership as a gift for a friend or loved one. Fill out the form below and mail it to the address at the bottom, or go to the WCHS website (whitmancountyhistoricalsociety.org).

MEMBERSHIP: Become a part of the exciting future of Whitman County Historical Society!

- | | | | |
|--|--------|---|-----------------|
| ☐ Individual Membership | - \$30 | ☐ Sustaining Membership. | - \$ 75 |
| ☐ Family Membership | - \$50 | ☐ Patron Membership | - \$100 or more |
| ☐ Business Membership. | - \$60 | ☐ Life Membership | - \$500 or more |

Name of continuing or new member, or gift recipient: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

Name of giver, if applicable: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

I'd like to make an additional donation: ☐ \$25.00 ☐ \$50.00 ☐ \$100.00 ☐ other \$ _____

Please direct my donation to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Greatest Need | ☐ Roy Chatters Newspaper and Printing Museum |
| ☐ Holy Trinity Chapel | ☐ Pullman Depot Heritage Center |
| ☐ Perkins House and Cabin | ☐ WCHS Archive |

Note that WCHS is a 501c 3. Your gift is tax deductible. Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Send to: WCHS Membership Chairman PO Box 67 COLFAX WA 99111