Bret Lunsford takes the helm of the W.T. Preston

Thank you to Mayor Laurie Gere for allowing the Museum to combine two part-time positions into one full-time position.

Bret Lunsford’s education curator position has been combined with the vacant maritime curator position to create...wait for it...a full-time Education & Maritime Curator. Bret took on his new responsibilities June 1, which include oversight of the W.T. Preston and the Maritime Heritage Center. Bret brings energy and enthusiasm along with a deep knowledge of Anacortes maritime history.

We also are pleased that Dave Margeson has joined us as a summer docent at the W.T. Preston. Welcome aboard.

Visit the historic W.T. Preston Tuesday-Sunday through the summer

The sternwheeler W.T. Preston, a National Historic Landmark, and the Anacortes Maritime Heritage Center is now open for summer hours — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays — in the 700 block of R Avenue.

Admission to the Preston is free for Anacortes Museum Foundation members and $1-$3 for non-members. There is no charge to drop in to the Heritage Center to learn about the sternwheeler and local vessels such as the codfish schooner Wawona and Bijaboji, the dugout canoe Betty Lowman rowed solo to Alaska in the 1930s.

The trimaran USA 17, which won the 33rd America’s Cup, is the focus of the center’s main exhibit. BMW Oracle: Building a World Champion in Anacortes. The exhibit includes a large model of the craft and a rudder, and offers mind-boggling facts — its wing sail is larger than a Boeing jet’s, its waterline footprint is the size of a baseball infield, and more.

To receive your newsletter via email, contact elainew@cityofanacortes.org

This newsletter is produced by the staff of the Anacortes Museum and edited by Elaine Walker
American Alliance of Museums Conference

In September 2011, while interviewing applicants for the Museum Administrative Assistant position, I asked a final question of each person: what would you like to see from the Anacortes Museum? This particular applicant answered without hesitation: I’d like the Museum to create an exhibit on the Great Depression and how the people of our island were affected. Now almost three years later, Elaine Walker is getting her wish.

On June 14 “All in the Same Boat” opens at the Anacortes Museum. This yearlong exhibit recounts the struggles and triumphs of the determined and resourceful people who populated our island during a very difficult period. Thank you to everyone in the community who contributed their personal stories. Some are heart-breaking, some funny, some inspirational, but all combine to tell a powerful story of life in the ‘30s in our little corner of the world.

In a museum of our size, everyone contributes to the production of an exhibit. Due to Elaine’s passion for research, her gift as a writer, her talent as a graphic designer, and her strong interest in this particular topic, she was designated as the lead for the exhibit. Due to the tremendous responsibility and increase to her work load, this could be viewed as both reward and punishment. As always, it has been a privilege to work with the talented and dedicated staff of the Anacortes Museum.

Don’t miss this informative new exhibit...

Steve Oakley, Museum Director

Now available: Lance Burdon: A Photographic Journey

Lance Burdon: A Photographic Journey
Hardcover, 112 pages, with more than 100 historic photographs

Cost: $35

At the dawn of the 20th century, Lance Burdon launched a career in photography, embarking on a photographic journey that provides an inside look at pioneer life on Fidalgo Island during early eras of hop and dairy farming, boomsntown schemes, steamboat travel, salmon fishing and the beginnings of industrialization. His own story — one of courageous exploration and tragedy — is illustrated with beautiful prints taken during his years on the island as the official photographer for the construction of the Atlin-Quesnel telegraph line between lower British Columbia to Alaska in 1900.

The book is a labor of love, written by Nancy Werner Mathews, a granddaughter whom Burdon never met. After Nancy died in 2012, her family and friends worked together to publish this book as a tribute to her.

The book is lavishly illustrated with 115 photographs, most of them Burdon’s, from the museum’s Wallie Funk Collection and private collections. Museum Educator Bret Lunsford edited the book and provided photo captions and photo section introductions.

Lance Burdon: A Photographic Journey was made possible by generous donations from Mathews’ family and friends to the Anacortes Museum Foundation. Proceeds from the sale of this book will fund a Nancy Werner Mathews endowment for use in future museum book projects through the Museum Foundation.

American Alliance of Museums Conference

I recently attended – along with my colleagues at the Anacortes Museum – the annual conference of the American Alliance of Museums, staged this year at Seattle’s Convention Center. A plethora of workshops were offered over the four-day span of the event. As interesting as the sessions themselves were all of the hundreds of dedicated museum professionals in attendance, many of whom sat on panels that discussed subjects ranging from “Online? Print? New Thinking about Museum Publications” to “Turning the Museum Inside Out” and “The Mobile Bandwagon: A Discussion of What Works and What Doesn’t.”

Too much to choose from, which is always the challenge of such a large conference. I tried to select workshops with subjects that seemed directly applicable to my education (and now maritime) curatorial work; I was impressed with both the range of presenters and subjects as well as the usefulness — all of the information was “noteworthy.” I look forward to the coming months when I’ll have an opportunity to follow through with study of all of the extra info and website links provided. And before long we may be on the mobile bandwagon … generating QR codes to enhance our exhibits and outreach for all of the smartphone users in the world.

Bret Lunsford, Education & Maritime Curator

Foss letters need to find their way ‘home’

History. Genealogy. Family. Memories. How do you get an insight into the lives of your ancestors or other family members? One good way is to read personal letters (in the era before email and texting) and study photographs. I have acquired 2 boxes of nearly 1,000 letters, postcards, addressed empty envelopes, a ledger, and more, for the Ole A. Foss family.

Are you related to Ole A. (born c. 1857 in Norway) and Andriana Pederson Barness Foss? Their children, all born in Minnesota, were Carl J. Foss born c. 1883, Eilert Eidens b.1886, Edwin b.1888, Eva b. 1891, Ann(a) Susan b. 1893 and Olga Amala Foss. The family moved to Montana then to Washington in 1900 from Minnesota to the booming west and lived mostly in the Bellingham area, although many lived in Anacortes.

Carl J. Foss worked in shingle mills in Edison, Anacortes, Concrete, and Bellingham over the time frame of about 1923 through 1947. It seems as though the members of Ole’s family remained close throughout their lives including the grand and great-grandchildren. I “met” this family because Deanna Ammons found these and nearly 300 photographs and brought them to me here at the museum. Most of the photographs are going into the collection, with many awaiting identification so they, too, can be processed.

Although the photos will remain here, the precious family ephemera belongs in the care of other family members. Do you recognize the names? Are you related? Other surnames include: Ogden, Baird, Ledlie, Hammer, Call, Belius, McCormack, Lingerlund, Hansen/Hansen, Grimsrud, Field, Hegg, Sunblad and others.

Will the mystery family “sign in please?” I would love to get these items to the rightful family members so they, too, can meet their loved ones. If any of these families may be related to you, please call or email Judy at the Anacortes Museum, 293-1915 or hakinsj@cityofanacortes.org.

— Judy Hakins, Collections Curator

Anacortes Museum Collections Curator Judy Hakins, right, and Administrative Assistant Elaine Walker attended a day of the American Alliance of Museums national conference, which was in Seattle May 18-21. AAM represents 15,000 professionals and volunteers from 3,000 of America’s 35,000 museums.