Holiday Open House and Annual Meeting
6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14

Say farewell to retiring Anacortes Museum Director Steve Oakley, see Burl Ives’ holiday decorations, and check out the festive “At Home in Anacortes” exhibit during the annual Holiday Open House hosted by the Anacortes Museum Foundation from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, in the Carnegie Gallery, 1305 8th St.

Before the Open House, at 6 p.m., Anacortes Museum Foundation members are asked to participate in the annual meeting and election at the museum. So far, the following have agreed to stand for election: President, Jeff Weldon; Vice President, Tom Thompson; Treasurer, Cecelia Weldon; and Member at Large, Jim Taylor. A nominee for Recording Secretary, to replace Barbara Larson who is retiring, has not been identified. If you (or someone you know) would like to run for any position, nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

We will laugh and probably cry as we toast Steve’s retirement with punch, coffee and pastries, and as we celebrate the renovation projects and other achievements of his decade here. We will also applaud the museum’s volunteers of the year.

A set of large and colorful cutout mural figures from “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” were bequeathed to the Anacortes Museum by Dorothy Ives, wife of the legendary Burl Ives, who starred in the television program. This will be the murals’ debut appearance in the Anacortes Museum.

Steve Oakley – In a league of his own

When Steve Oakley applied for the job of Director of the Anacortes Museum in 2007, he took a hard look at our largest artifact, the Carnegie Library building, which desperately needed some TLC. “Here we go again,” he thought.

Thanks to Steve, the Carnegie Building is restored to its 1910 glory, inside and out. With the exception of plastering, electrical work and floor finishing, all interior work was done by staff and volunteers. With his Nov. 30 retirement, the restored Carnegie Building is the most visible legacy of his decade of leadership at the Anacortes Museum. (See insert in this newsletter for more on the Carnegie Building renovations.)

Other work completed under Steve’s tenure includes exhibit upgrades, installation of the long-awaited handicapped lift and restoration of the 5’ x 9’ leaded glass panel at the entrance of the gallery. Steve was the City’s liaison to the Anacortes Historic Preservation Board and put in many hours helping on the annual Anacortes Antique Engine & Machinery Show. At his instigation, the W.T. Preston Interpretive Center took on additional duties and became the more locally relevant Anacortes Maritime Heritage Center.

Museum staff members appreciated working for Steve, who has a positive attitude, a ready laugh and a willingness to let employees pursue (within parameters of the institution’s mission) projects that have inspired them. Several new and/or updated museum books are among the direct results of his support and encouragement.

We wish Steve and his wife Jean (who recently retired from the library) a happy and rewarding retirement, and thank them very much for their contributions to the City.
Director Steve Oakley says goodbye

After 41 years of association with the museum business, and over ten wonderful years as the director of the Anacortes Museum, I’m moving on to new endeavors.

From the first exhibit when I arrived, “Colorful Characters & Local Lore,” to the final one, “At Home in Anacortes,” the focus has always been on the people of Fidalgo and Guemes islands and the rich stories that define them.

I’m proud of the museum’s many accomplishments during my tenure. Among them are:

- Transitioning the focus of the Heritage Center from the snagboat, to Anacortes maritime history
- Making available the museum’s large collection of historic photographs online
- Initiating the digitization of Anacortes newspapers into a keyword searchable database
- Producing several high-quality hardback books
- Improving the design and presentation of exhibits, and
- Restoring the Carnegie Building to its original 1910 appearance.

Obviously none of this could have happened without the creative energy and abilities of a dedicated, enthusiastic museum staff. Their talents amaze me.

Thank you to three fine boards, museum volunteers, patrons and donors. Working with you has been an honor and a pleasure.

To Mayor Gere, the City Council and the Citizens of Anacortes, thank you for having the vision to establish, and the determination to maintain a community history museum, through thick and thin, for 50 years.

My congratulations to Bret Lunsford, the museum’s new director. The museum will be in competent, caring hands.

As I slip into the next phase of my life, I thank you all. It has been a very good ride.

Director Steve Oakley
November 30, 2017

Bret Lunsford becomes director on December 1

My hat is off to Steve Oakley, and the great team chemistry he cultivated here at our museum.

Continuity will be the watchword as I transition into the director’s role. For those who don’t already know me, here is some brief background information.

Fidalgo Island has been my lifelong home. My love of Anacortes history began early, and my participation in the Anacortes Museum includes terms on both the Anacortes Museum Advisory Board and the Anacortes Museum Foundation Board. In my six years on the job at the museum, working alongside Steve and my colleagues as the Education and Maritime Curator, I have learned about every aspect of museum operations, facilities and programs. I also pursued museum studies at the University of Washington, earning certification in 2016.

I have chosen Anacortes as a subject for four book projects, two of which I authored prior to my employment at the museum. These book projects exemplify my commitments to historical stewardship and community engagement. My work in local history translates into an enduring belief in the museum’s mission and a vision for planning – with staff, boards and the whole community – the future of a meaningful and interactive Anacortes Museum.

Already the museum team is preparing for a new exhibit at the Maritime Heritage Center, focusing on the history of the local pulp mill, working with former mill employees and their families to tell the stories of this important 20th century industry. Also in the works for 2018 will be more web access to our collections, including the early decades of Anacortes American newspapers. A rededication of the museum courtyard area is planned, featuring a new flagpole and interpretive signage commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Anacortes Museum’s opening at the Carnegie Building and the 60th anniversary of the board that established it.

As someone who remembers the early days of the Anacortes Museum, I’m excited about what we’ll be doing in the coming years to build on the work of all of our predecessors in community history.

Director Bret Lunsford
December 1, 2017
News from Causland Memorial Park

A colorful interpretive sign has been installed on the west side of the wall supporting the war memorial plaques. The new sign covers the history of the park parcel, the life of Guemes Island’s Harry Leon Causland (after whom the park is named), and the park’s designer, Jean Baptiste LePage.

Museum staff member Bret Lunsford created the sign. It was installed with funding and staff support from the Anacortes Parks & Recreation Department. Jim Rains created the metal frame for the sign and installed it on the memorial’s west wall.

Amsberry’s Cafe sign new accession to museum collection

Bret Lunsford spotted an interesting sign leaning against the back of a local garage. The sign advertised Amsberry’s Cafe, which was operated by Ralph Amsberry at 818 Commercial Avenue from 1951 until 1970. His parents operated an Amsberry’s Coffee Shop & Cafe near 5th and Commercial in the 1930s.

Bret and Steve Oakley dug out the sign on October 24. It had been stored in the alley for many years. The sign is constructed of painted sheet metal, and originally seems to have had neon tubing formed around it.

The sign was donated by Jenifer Holien, facilitated by her daughter Tiffany Holien.

Pudding Stone mystery solved

Museum Docent Al Bofenkamp has been intrigued by the large stone adjacent to the walk on the southwest corner of Causland Memorial Park. Museum visitors would ask about the stone and the engraving on the stone’s base.

Recently, Al came across an article on the front page of the August 31, 1922 Anacortes American. The headline read, “Pudding Stone put on base in Causland Park.”

The article revealed that the Pudding Stone, named because it resembles a raisin or Christmas pudding, was uncovered during excavation of a basement for the nearby Catholic Church.

“It is a fine specimen of conglomerate of washed gravel and boulders cemented. There are many deposits of similar material all along the Cascades. J.S. Bird says the parent ledge of this particular block is on the south fork of Cascade Creek, some 60 miles east of here, and that it was brought down by a glacier, and that if it traveled no faster than Alpine glaciers do, it was at least 60 years in getting here.”
CANDACE WELLMAN TO READ HISTORY OF LOCAL INDIGINOUS WOMEN

Bellingham author Candace Wellman will read excerpts from her book, “Peace Weavers, Uniting the Salish Coast through Cross-cultural Marriages” at 7 p.m. on January 24, 2018 at the Anacortes Public Library, 1220 10th Street, Anacortes.

Between 1854 and the early 1870s, ninety percent of local marriages were cross-cultural. When histories were written, these indigenous women and their contribution to new communities were ignored. “Peace Weavers” opens the door to a new appreciation of them with four biographies and a new account of the early history. One updated biography is of Caroline Davis Kavanaugh, a Samish-Swinomish young woman married first to Jefferson Davis’ nephew and second to the county sheriff. She spent nearly all of her life on March Point (Shais-quihl).

Wellman will be available to answer questions and sign books. You may purchase the book at the event, in the Anacortes Museum Store and at other local bookstores.

AT HOME IN ANACORTES EXHIBIT ONGOING

Retiring Director Steve Oakley’s love of historic preservation is apparent in the museum’s current exhibit, “At Home in Anacortes.”

The focal point of the exhibit is the front door and porch salvaged by Steve and Bret Lunsford from a home at 819 4th Street prior to its demolition in April 2017.

Steve reassembled the pieces for use in the exhibit. The exhibit is ongoing.

Anacortes Museum Foundation

Through memberships, the Anacortes Museum Foundation supports and assists the educational and preservation goals of the Anacortes Museum.

Become a Member—Support Local History!

Benefits of Annual Membership and Annual Membership Categories

♦ FREE admission to the W.T. Preston and Maritime Heritage Center
♦ 10% discount at the Museum store
♦ Invitation to exhibit openings and special events
♦ Quarterly Museum newsletter

Senior (65+)/Student ................................ $20
Individual .............................................. $25
Family ........................................... $40
Business/Organization ____________________ $75
Sponsor ............................................. $100
Life ....................................................... $250
Donation .............................................. $__

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Please make checks payable to: Anacortes Museum Foundation. Send to: 1305 8th St, Anacortes, WA 98221. Thank you!

Anacortes Museum
1305 8th Street
Anacortes, WA 98221
360-293-1915

The Carnegie Gallery is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. The Museum Office is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday.

The Anacortes Museum and Maritime Heritage Center exist to preserve and interpret the history of Fidalgo and Guemes islands and to nurture in the community an awareness and appreciation of its heritage.

This newsletter is produced by the staff of the Anacortes Museum and edited by Linda Yerby.
Steve Oakley had worked at several museums prior to starting his job with the City of Anacortes in May 2007. As executive director of the Union County Historical Society in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Georgia, he renovated a house. He also developed a farmstead called the Mountain Life Museum, continued the renovation of the 1889 Union County Courthouse, and with his wife, Jean, started a heritage craft festival called Mountain Marketplace.

Seeing the Anacortes Museum’s Carnegie Building for the first time in 2007, Steve thought, “Here we go again!” He found that the large windows on the main floor had been walled over to provide more exhibit space and to block the potentially harmful UV rays produced by natural sunlight. The building smelled musty. Lower level office windows also were walled over and the exterior of the building lacked character with its uniform color and blocked windows.

Renovation of upstairs gallery begins in 2008

In January 2008, Steve, with the assistance of Maritime Curator Vernon Lauridsen and volunteer Graham Oakley, started an extensive renovation of the upstairs gallery. The restoration project focused on the central and east end of the gallery. Windows were reopened by carefully removing the 12-foot-high walls that covered them. Extensive restoration of the window frames was required, including the fabrication of missing components. City of Anacortes Parks and Recreation Department scraped paint off the exterior of the museum windows.

Ceiling work included the removal of the acoustical tile ceiling and fluorescent lights. Walls were re-plastered and repainted. A new track lighting system was installed in the east gallery.

Workers removed the 30-year-old bright green carpet, revealing the clear fir flooring which was then refinished. All of this work required the endless moving of large artifacts, from pianos to telephone booths and antique cases.

(Left) The telephone booth from Inkster’s Rexall Drug and the Nelson family pump organ were shuffled around during the renovation.

(Right) Graham Oakley removing ceiling tile residue.
Lift installation was completed in September 2008

In September 2008, the installation of a long-awaited handicapped lift was completed, allowing more visitors to visit the upstairs gallery. The funds to finance the lift were raised over many years by the Anacortes Museum Foundation and through generous donations received from numerous community individuals and organizations.

Beginning the final phase of upstairs restoration, 2009

In January and February 2009, the Carnegie Gallery was closed for the final phase of upstairs restoration. (Offices and the research library remained open on the ground level.) The cannery office display was dismantled, reduced in size and renovated. It was relocated to the Gallery’s south side to open up the windows on the north and west sides.

Carnegie Building turns 100 in 2010

In 2010, the Carnegie Building turned 100. To celebrate this milestone, the museum restored and reinstalled the large 5' x 9' leaded glass panel that once graced the entrance to this community icon. The panel had been removed from its original location many years ago due to sagging glass. Typically, leaded glass has a life span of around 80 years. The restoration process provided additional supports to prevent a reoccurrence of sagging. The restoration work was done by McElroy Art Glass & Design and was funded by a grant from our friends at the Noon Kiwanis Club.

The three-year restoration of the main floor of the Carnegie Building was now complete.
Beginning the restoration of offices and Research Library, 2012

With a bang (and a cloud of dust), Steve launched the much-delayed renovation of the Carnegie Building’s ground floor. He caught museum staff by surprise two days before Thanksgiving when they arrived for work and found he had spent the weekend tearing holes in the office walls. The lower level work had begun.

(Left) Old, no longer used ductwork was removed from north wall of the museum office.

(Right) Damaged acoustical tile ceiling was removed, exposing original plaster and lath. It was then covered with drywall and painted.

Research Area

Next came the real challenge — the jam-packed research area. Bret Lunsford moved newspapers into the archives and set up files and a research table in the Carnegie Gallery. Books were shelved in a hallway. Westminster Presbyterian Church offered a corner of their basement, a generous gift of space that allowed us to store furniture and other non-artifacts out of the way. This extra space allowed us to stay open to researchers, with only brief closures during the project.

The restoration uncovered three blocked windows. On a north window, Children’s Library hours were still posted — a sign hidden for at least 40 years.

Old brown carpet hid the glowing fir floor. After the carpet was removed, the staff enjoyed the floor briefly, then reluctantly watched as it was re-carpeted to dampen noise and retain heat, leaving it safely protected for the future.

By Christmas, the office had new carpet and paint. Gone were ugly acoustic ceiling tiles, long-abandoned ductwork, 1970s blue paneling, and an ugly tangle of wires.

An antique bookcase replaced ugly shelving, and custom mail slots replaced plastic trays.

Steve Oakley uncovering the north windows of the research area.

Cotty Howe built the mail slots in the office.

Children’s Library hours now visible after at least 40 years.

Steve Oakley, Dick Bagnall and Bret Lunsford remove bookshelves covering the north windows.

Original clear fir flooring in research and office area.

Along the way, there were unpleasant discoveries to be dealt with including decay, soggy insulation, and damaged flooring and window sills. The work restored the room to the graceful proportions envisioned in 1909 by architects Piper & Cox of Bellingham. The office and research library restoration was made possible by the generous donation of $6,000 in memory of Orrie Rodeffer. Other funding and resources were contributed by the City of Anacortes, the Anacortes Museum Foundation, the Fidalgo Finderskeepers Chapter of Questers and Westminster Presbyterian Church.
Lower hall, stairwell and exterior painting were accomplished in 2016

In 2016, Steve completed the renovation of the last untouched public area, the stairwell and lower hallway. The plywood covering the west door was removed and electrical conduit on that wall was hidden behind a false wall. Other electrical wiring in the hall was re-routed. Florescent lighting fixtures were removed and replaced with fixtures more fitting the era.

Exterior Painting

The city’s grand Carnegie Library building, home of the Anacortes Museum, looked better than it had in decades following the completion of the exterior painting in 2016.

The $30,000 exterior project (funded by the City of Anacortes) was expedited because of the need to repair failing windows. The Anacortes Parks Department removed paint from second floor windows, and painter/contractor H.S. Wold, who recently painted City Hall, did the painting and repairs.

The new colors were selected from a palette of colors used in 1910, the year the building was completed. Oakley chose buff for the body of the building, reminiscent of the unpainted buff-colored bricks patrons would have seen until the building was first painted (in a cream color) in the 1960s. A later color scheme, possibly inspired by the Bicentennial, included dark blue grays and red trim. Splashes of red are included in the new color scheme, while windowsills, pillars and trim are a dark gray-green.

The completion of the exterior painting brought the nearly decade-long renovation project to a close.

Just one more thing before you go? Remove mold and mildew from masonry walls in Artifact Room in 2017

Steve couldn’t resist a plea from Elaine Walker, Curator of Collections, for one more project before he retired—to remove mold and mildew from masonry walls under the windows in the Artifact Room. The work was completed in October 2017.

Retiring in November 2017 after ten years as museum director, Steve Oakley leaves behind a beautifully restored Carnegie Building for the museum and a treasure for members of the community who remember visiting the library in their youth. Steve has been the driving force to bring the Carnegie Building back to its glory.