

MUSEUM GUIDE

Arcadia Museum 'a vision made real' by town residents

BY ANDY TAYLOR-FABE

Record-Eagle staff writer

Ten years ago, the Arcadia Museum was nothing more than a run-down Victorian house, deteriorating on a lot one mile outside of the small town.

Known as a "painted lady" because of its intricate color scheme, the house was in shambles, said Jeanne Grandstaff, treasurer of the Arcadia Historical Commission and trustee of the Arcadia Historical Society.

The residents of Arcadia, driven by their curiosity about the town's history, decided they needed a place to keep the artifacts of old Arcadia.

After building a new foundation for the house in town, the residents moved the dilapidated structure to its new location in Arcadia and began the real chore: restoring the house to its former glory. Over the next few years, the house was stripped, painted and rebuilt. Although some of the renovations were done by professionals, the townspeople worked on many of the tasks themselves, said Grandstaff.

"It was a uniting factor," she said.

The museum opened in 2000, complete with rooms restored to resemble early 1900s parlors, bedrooms and offices. There are also rooms that display Indian artifacts, equipment from the logging industry, Ironston dishware and antique toys.

And the best part? The museum opened debt-free, a luxury that allows the Historical Society to use

donations to insure the future security of the museum instead of merely staying afloat.

Since the Historical Society is too small to set up its own trust, the Manistee Foundation handles its finances, Grandstaff said. The Historical Society pays a fee to the Manistee Foundation, but the Society's investment opportunities and interest rates are improved through their involvement with the Foundation.

Fund-raising is sometimes difficult in a town with a population of 365 in the winter and about 1,000 in the summer. However, Grandstaff said, summer fund-raising events usually bring in the \$4,000-5,000 necessary for annual upkeep.

Along with normal fund-raising activities, members of

the Historical Society will be holding "artifact drives" throughout the summer. They're seeking not only antiques, but written and oral accounts of Arcadia's history.

This summer, the Historical Society has begun a new building project. Plans to construct a turn-of-the-century carriage house are in the works.

To be built adjacent to the museum, the carriage house will feature farming, logging and maritime antiques that are too large for the museum. The house will also have a room for educational purposes and, since the museum is technically connected with the town government, a meeting room for the historical commission.

Although fund-raising just began on July 1, the Historical Society plans to break ground this fall and



complete construction sometime next year.

Despite the \$57,000 estimated cost of the carriage house, Grandstaff said that borrowing money is not an option.

"We never go ahead with anything until we have the funds in hand," she said, adding, "It may slow down our progress, but we'd rather not owe anything. That way, we can pay more attention to things we want to do with the museum."

Museum hours: 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Thu.-Sat. For more information, call 889-4360.



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Top: The Arcadia Museum. Bottom: A replica of the office of the old Arcadia furniture factory.



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