

Historic Ivinson Mansion
Laramie Plains Museum Newsletter

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the mansion

LARAMIE PLAINS MUSEUM AT THE
HISTORIC IVINSON MANSION

Once Upon A Time in Hollywood

An update and review of this
summer's "Evening at the
Ivinsons" event. Page 4.

"Hunton" up some Melodies

Learn about our newest items—
pianist John Hunton's Sheet
Music Collection. Page 8.

LARAMIE PLAINS MUSEUM - 603 E IVINSON AVE



LPM Volunteers and Davis Logworks crew removing old shingles from the Marshall Schoolhouse.

Fall Updates for LPM Complex

AMY ALLEN
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The biggest question we've been fielding over here at the mansion, has been a resounding, "What happened to the schoolhouse!" As we promised in our last issue, problems concerning dry rot in foundation logs in the schoolhouse have been addressed by the dismantling of the structure. Don't worry, the schoolhouse is safe and sound, being stored in pieces until the completion of the construction of the new Carriage House expansion. We owe a big thank you to Jim Davis and his crew over at Davis Logworks, as well as some of our own volunteers, Tanner Evans, Bob Routson, Scott Morton, Bruce Lange, and Konnie Cronk, who helped with the disassembly process. Also, our thanks

goes out to Ken Braisted over at Cowboy Moving who helped us out with a nifty storage solution for the schoolhouse logs.

Things might be slowing down as we approach Fall, but that doesn't mean we are any less busy over here at the Museum Complex. Between wrapping up the last of this year's weddings, preparing for our Halloween Event and Holiday Open House events, and getting ready for the cooler weather, we have been keeping on our toes. And with winter fast approaching, our staff is looking for some help with snow removal this year, so if you have a college-aged neighbor, friend, or grandkid who is interested in making a little money, have them give us a call. We'll provide all the necessary equipment.

BANG BANG!

AMY ALLEN
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reach for the sky, partner! Learn how we wrangle prohibited items in the Alice Hardie Stevens Center.

Hunting season may have just opened for the state, but here at the Alice Hardie Stevens Center, we are wrapping up a pretty successful season of our own. What would we be hunting here on the property, you may ask? Well, ever since the completion of the AHSC in 2018, the LPM staff has been wrestling with a particularly troubling invasive species, the terrible, no-good... helium balloon.

Our dear renters will bring in these innocent-seeming decorations, and as the night goes on and partying ensues, the balloons accidentally get released into the new Cathedral-beamed ceilings, where they are nigh unreachable. The balloons hang out, lurking, waiting, until the next rental event, where they inevitably descend like colorful, unwelcome guests onto the party.

We have officially banned helium balloons for this reason, but a wily few still slip through. Our solution is a pretty standard Western idea—we shoot them down. However, since the firing of firearms is frowned upon in the city limits of Laramie, we came up with a different, more creative solution—the Nerf blaster.

We're sure most of you are familiar with this line of products, probably seen grandkids chasing their siblings around with one, or found a dart laying in your yard after an epic neighborhood-wide battle. But if your aren't, Nerf blasters are basically fancy dart launchers which use three or four inch foam darts as ammo. Kids generally shoot them at themselves, their friends, your already malcontented cat—they don't hurt because they have a soft rounded tip.



Konnie poses with a dreaded balloon.
Paid Actor.

For the purposes of balloon hunting, we have of course made some modifications to the standard ammo—which includes threading a regular sewing needle into the foam dart. Then, it's just a matter of lining up and launching our converted dart toward the wayward balloon.

To be honest with you, it does take a couple shots to down each balloon. They have the advantage of the high ground after all, but we have always just considered that "fair chase." There is something satisfying about lining up the perfect shot and watching them POP! But more often than not, the needle pierces the tough, metallic hide of the helium balloon and it slowly descends, leaking air with a high-pitch whine.

So if you ever happen to be driving by the mansion and see one of the staff members practicing our aim with a bright green blaster—you'll know now that we are just doing our part for local conservation.

Staff Spotlight

HELEN PUGSLEY
ADMIN ASSISTANT

Summer may be over, but our staff is still keeping busy. Helen took a few minutes to interview herself for this *Staff Spotlight*.

How did you become involved with the museum?

HP: Amy. Mary Mountain had heard about me through Amy, as she and I have been friends for a very long time. At the time I was working at a hotel in the mountains and Mary asked me in for an interview. The rest is history!

How long have you been with the museum?

HP: We're creeping up on two years now.

What brought you to Laramie?

HP: A Brown Ford Taurus.

What do you do?

HP: I do a little bit of everything! I come in to set up for the weddings and other events we host on the grounds, I help run the Carriage House Gift Shop, I can give tours, I've helped curatorial move exhibits and clean. I even got to help accession new pieces once! I torture my coworkers and our volunteers by interviewing them (definitely not interviewing myself right now...) for our website and our newsletter. I do everything from something as glamorous as working the "Evening" to something as unglamorous as raking rose petals off the lawn.

What's your favorite room in the Mansion?

HP: I like to tell kids I live under the grand staircase. We have a picture of me pretending to come out of it. I promise it's not very interesting, just storage! Now, the library on the other hand.... That's beautiful, and I enjoy the presence of the books even though I'm not actually allowed to look at them.

What's the coolest object in our collection?



Helen Pugsley

HP: I love showing the tours the flowers made out of wonder bread. The mustache cups are so neat I found myself one at a rummage sale!

What object in our collection would you use to fight a bear?

HP: I'm on the third floor locking up... I go to the Fort Sanders room to make sure that light got turned off, then I hear him... the great brown grizzly bear coming up the stairs, grunting softly under his breath... I freeze... But then I come to when he's only halfway up, so I grab one of the saddles off of its stand and get ready to chuck it at him so it will bowl him back down the stairs and I can escape. It's then the great brown grizzly bear opens his mouth and says, "Whoa bro, can I have a hug?"

"Uuuh..." I quietly lower my saddle-weapon. "Sorry, you startled me.... Um, I'm not super comfortable with hugs while I'm working but okay, I guess...?"

The bear and I hug it out. I have defeated him with the power of love.

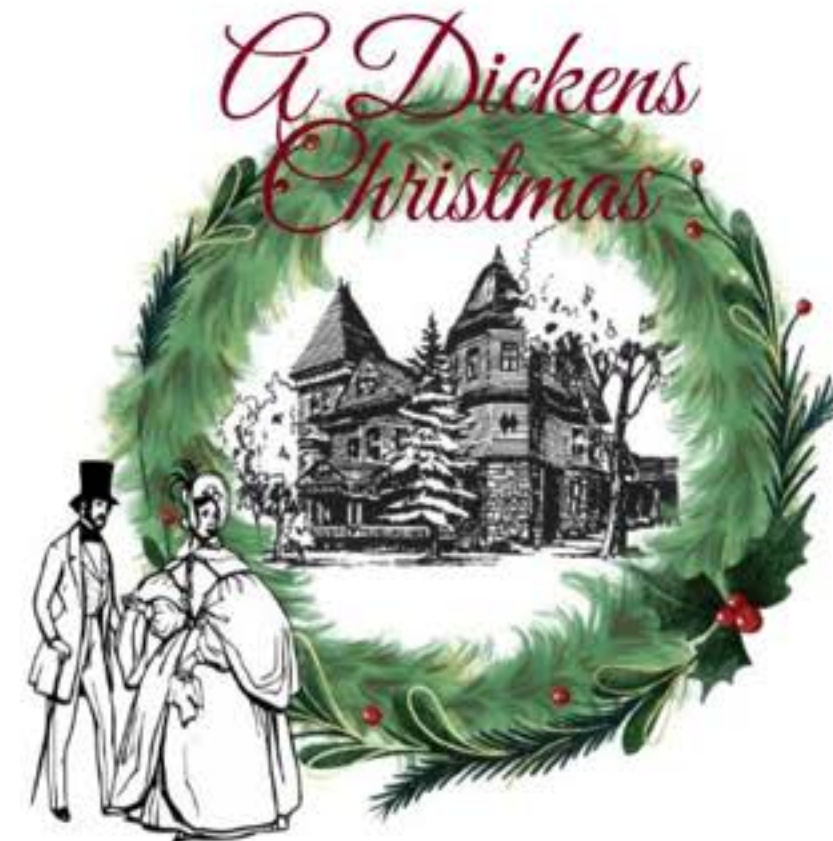
"You still have to leave though, bear-bro. I gotta close."

To be perfectly honest with you, given my nature, I would attempt to fight a bear with a feather duster if he snuck up on me.

Join us for our upcoming events!



Swing by **Saturday, October 28th** for \$2 walk-through tours, candy for the kiddos, and a sale in the Gift Shop for participating customers.



And it's never too early to mark down our annual **Holiday Open House** in your calendar.

Join us **December 9th and 10th** for free tours of the decorated mansion, the Laramie Woman's Club holiday bazaar, and other great festivities.

Our theme this year is Dickens Christmas, so be prepared for all out Victoriana. We promise we'll decorate the *dickens* out of it!

December 9th, 3-6pm
December 10th, 1-4pm

ONCE UPON A TIME IN Hollywood



If we're allowed to pat ourselves on the back, we really put on the old razzle-dazzle for this year's "Evening at the Ivinsons'." True to our theme, "The Golden Age of Hollywood," the Board of Directors, Evening Committee, and LPM staff put on the ritz and threw a party worthy of the red carpet. Thank you to all of you who came out to celebrate with us. As you know, the "Evening" is our premiere annual fundraiser—the profits going directly to the care and preservation of the mansion and its operating costs—and we can't thank you enough for your generous support.

This year, we started off with a bang

with appetizers and cocktails on the lawn. The outdoor space was decked out with our silent auction items, a King Kong photo-stand-in hand-painted by our Curator Konnie Cronk, and a Hollywood Sign designed and put together by Christel Walrath, Kathy Keenan, and Joyce Powell. People milled around, talking and having a good time in the, thankfully, cool weather. The weather was extremely good to us—so props to whoever managed to convince the rain to hold off until we went inside to eat! Tanner Evans, our Board President, welcomed the crowd, and Amy Allen, our Interim Executive Director, ran through the order of events, before turning the mic

According to family history, his health prevented him from pursuing a career as a concert pianist. Eventually, John moved back to Laramie where he became a piano teacher for the University of Wyoming as well as a private instructor. He also led an orchestra group called "Hunton's Orchestra." Probably what John was most well known for was his position at the Empress Theater as the music director. During the silent movie era, the theater provided musical accompaniment to the films and John chose what pieces to play for each scene. He played piano for every showing and sometimes conducted a group of musicians.

John amassed a huge collection of sheet music and classical scores that was sorted by themes including romance, military, Japanese, etc. A few of the pieces were annotated with John's notes. He signed the majority of his music with his distinctive signature "Jno. L. Hunton."



A cartoon of John Hunton.

The mansion currently has an exhibit featuring the Empress Theater as well as John Hunton, where several examples of his sheet music can be viewed.

Looking for Volunteer Opportunities?

The Laramie Plains Museum is always looking for helping hands. If you are interested or know of someone who might be, call or stop by the Carriage House. We have opportunities for any interest or level, including:

- Docenting and Tours
- Curatorial Work
- Feather Dusting
- Holiday Open House Decorating
- And much more...



The Empress Theatre formerly located on 2nd. Street.

“Hunton” up some Melodies...

KONNIE CRONK
CURATOR

As we fall into a familiar rhythm with the closing of summer and approach of fall, those of us in Curatorial have moved back to the quiet and cozy Brick house to tackle projects, some new, and some previously set aside. Currently, our to do list includes accessioning new collections into the museum’s assemblage. Our most current collection is for John Hunton. Not the John Hunton whose diaries document the nineteenth century Wyoming Frontier, but rather his nephew whose family settled in Wheatland, Wyoming.

Now, you may ask, what does Mr. Hunton, the nephew, have to do with

Laramie? Well, John Hunton was born in 1883 in Baltimore, Maryland. By 1889, John, along with his parents and five siblings, lived in Wheatland. His father, Tom, was a rancher and his mother, Mora, a music teacher and artist. John was the oldest and attended the University of Wyoming, graduating from the Music Department. He also attended the Sherwood Music School in Chicago and the Chicago Music College under the tutelage of Felix Barowski (for composition) and Percy Grainger (for piano performance). John was invited to Denver to lead the Symphony Orchestra in a concert but became ill from heart problems.

back over to Dan Brain, entertainer and auctioneer extraordinaire. Konnie and a few junior docents gave walk-through tours of the mansion, while the Cox Family played classic movie scores in the Drawing Room.

Afterward, our guests, dressed to the nines as starlets and action heroes, slipped into the Alice Hardie Stevens Center for a wonderful dinner provided by the Hilton Garden Inn. Mary Mountain, Executive Director Emerita, served as the night’s emcee. Mary gave a wonderful tribute to our generous donors, William and JoAnn Baillie, whose support of the museum has been exceptional. Jim and Saundy Sullivan, executors of the Baillie Estate, joined other long-time friend of the Baillies, Germaine St. John, to help us celebrate their legacy. Thanks for joining us, Jim and Saundy!

Mary also presented this year’s “Evening at the Ivinsons” Evening Honoree award to the very deserving Bob and Judy Adams. The Adams are a powerhouse volunteering/donor couple, who among other generous acts, provide alcohol for events like the “Evening.” We rely heavily on their expertise in matters of wine, both for the night’s bar, and for the collection of exquisite wines that are featured on our live auction every year. Bob and Judy always take care of us, so we wanted to honor their donations and services. If you see them around town, be sure to thank them on behalf of the museum!

Then toward the end of the night, Danno showed off his auctioneering skills during our live auction, featuring great prizes like Wildcatter tickets, a trip to Mexico, handmade stained glass, and other pieces of great art. Thanks to



Drs. Eric Nye and Carol Frost with John Nutter and Suzanne Lewis.



Nancy Werner, Christel Walrath, Linda Haynes, and Judy Bruce.

Photos by Pennie Espeland and Nancy Werner.



Joyce Powell, Konnie Cronk, and Christel Walrath work on the letters for the Hollywood sign.

all of those who bid on items, and all those generous donors who provided items to both our silent and live auction. The night wouldn't be the same without your generosity.

Afterward, Interim Executive Director Amy Allen closed out the night with another little closing speech and a toast to our guests and friends.

Our staff, Evening Committee, and members of the board wrapped up the Evening season with cleanup the next morning. Special thanks to all of you who helped with set-up and clean up.

Join us next year for our next "Evening at the Ivinsons," Saturday, August 17th, 2024.



Evening Program folding brigade.



Some of our Evening favorites. Gary Espeland, E. G. Meyer, Barbara Hoffman, Suzy Taylor, Kathy Kearns, and Dan Brain.



Members of the Cox Family Strings.



A crowd of stars!