

Lava Pride Honors Museum

I wasn't at all sure why the Lava Pride Group selected the South Bannock County Historical Center and Museum as their October choice for an award. I did suspect that I had missed something so I started digging. Wow! It turns out that not only Lava Pride has honored the Museum but also the Idaho State Historical Society as well. Two "Esto Perpetua" awards are sitting proudly on the desk in the Museum. One honors the Museum and one honors Ruth Ann Olsen, who one of the founding visionaries who continues as the leader today.

But back to the museum! It was begun in 1979 when someone brought an artifact to Ruth Ann. She, and her friends, realized that there is a lot of history in Lava and it needed to be preserved. A building was secured and over the years more space was required. That reality was jolted when the Ramseys donated a piano. So the bank building in the heart of Lava was purchased. And by now the Museum again needs more space.

Fred Hinz was the first president. Over the years the organization has been lovingly shepherded by many people, including Barry Keller, Don Worthylake, Ron Hatzenbuhler, and Darrell Byington. And I would include the current and past museum staffs.

So I decided I ought to spend some time seeing the exhibits. I was mesmerized by the slide show of early Lava. The Idaho Humanities Council had digitized 150 old photos which provides the images. Of course there are nature exhibits, historical events, rumors and folklore stuff. These are the exhibits one would expect in a museum. Of course I kept an eye out for some evidence of my off relative, Charley Bell, who was deputy sheriff eighty or ninety years ago and worked the timber up Dempsey Creek.

But it's not the "things" inside that have determined the Museum's importance to Lava. It's the service that makes the place so important. Cathy Sher has been instrumental in art projects for Lava's youth. These have included the six year olds as well as the high school kids. There have been birding tours from the Museum. And there are booklets available on the historical Lava, and a walking tour of the village.

Another service the Museum handles is fielding questions and phone calls from visitors who seek information. The calls range from inquiries about the local area from McCammon to Soda Springs as well as questions about motels, retail establishments, the pools, and tubing. The Museum is the visitor hub for the area.

So I learned that the choice of the Lava Priders to salute and honor the South Bannock Historical Center and Museum is long overdue and very justified. Please stop by and tell them how important they are to all of us.

Bob Rush