



Alder Creek Pioneer Association Carousel Museum



Top, carousel horses gallop around the perimeter of the Alder Creek Pioneer Association Museum in Bickleton. Above left, detail of the ornate decoration on one of the restored carousel chariots. Below center, a barbed wire display board. Below right, a photo wall of armed forces members from east Klickitat County.



Museum board members Janet Brown, left, and Lynn Mains with horses from a carousel the Alder Creek Pioneer Association bought in 1929. Restoration of the horses and carriages began in 1968.

East Klickitat County heritage and memorabilia displayed in timeless showcase

By Jeanie Senior

Twenty-four brightly-painted wooden carousel horses, with names like Scout, Champ and Checkers, circle the perimeter of the Alder Creek Pioneer Association museum in Bickleton.

Part of a Hershell-Spillman wood track carousel, built between 1890 and 1907, the horses leave the museum one weekend a year in mid-June, when carousel rides are a highlight of the annual Alder Creek Pioneer Picnic and Rodeo. This was the event's 101st year.

The Pioneer Association bought the carousel in 1929 from Oaks Park in Portland for \$500. Today, it is one of a handful of its kind still operating in the United States.

Before the museum's construction, made possible by a \$450,000 grant from the state of Washington, the horses were kept in a secret location, only visible on rodeo weekend.

Museum Hours

The museum is open April to October. Hours are Thursday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. Group tours by appointment. Admission: adults, \$4, children \$1, families \$10. For more information, call (509) 896-2007.

Now the carousel horses and four chariot seats—all shining from a \$40,000 restoration process that began in 1968—stand guard over a museum that showcases the history of east Klickitat County.

The state grant was augmented by hours of community labor. Klickitat County bought the property where the museum is located.

As for the displays, “We got advice

from curators around the area,” says museum board member Lynn Mains. “But we do all our own work.”

Lynn and Janet Brown, both from wheat ranching families, say the exhibit depicting the evolution of wheat growing in the area points out a few home truths: that growing hybrid wheat aided by high-tech equipment is a considerable step forward from the early days of horse-drawn equipment and sacked wheat.

There is a display dedicated to the Bank of Bickleton, in business from 1903 until it failed in 1931, brought down by the Great Depression. There are framed news stories about the man who robbed the bank in 1916.

Other exhibits include an early farm kitchen; a huge barbed wire collection; farm and ranch hardware, including a small Delco power plant of the sort that provided power to early farmers; and a section devoted to local residents who served in the armed forces. ■