

*Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats*

# *Issue #6*

*June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

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newsletter. It's included here as a  
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The C♦DPHS is an association of individuals dedicated to the preservation of the history of our community. To the preservation of the region's oral history, literary history, social history, graphic and pictorial history, and our history as represented by the region's artifacts and structures. To the preservation of this history for future generations. To the art of making this common heritage accessible to the public. And to the act of collaborating with other individuals and organizations sharing similar goals.

The Clayton ♦ Deer Park Historical Society's

## Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats

— or —

Bits of Chatter, Trivia, and Notices  
— all strung together.

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### Susan (Stewart) Rumble Donates Several Leno Prestini Artifacts.

— Wally Lee Parker —

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Society President Bill Sebright received the following email — with three images attached — from Susan Rumble. He forwarded a copy of the missive to me with the notation, “I thought you might want to see this.”

Susan is a 1967 graduate of Deer Park High School and sister of former area resident and longtime member of the Clayton ♦ Deer Park Historical Society, Chuck Stewart. Chuck, Susan, and family were former residents of both Loon Lake and Clayton. Nowadays Susan lives in the Arden, Washington area, just a few miles south of Colville. While Chuck lives in southeastern Washington at Kennewick. The Society's print media has published eight outstanding articles by Chuck — two of which were co-

authored by Susan.

The letter Susan wrote to Bill began, “Hello Bill, and the Society. I have some things that I believe were done by Leno, although I can't prove such — no markings or autographs — but the family has had them forever, with the understanding that they were Leno's. I'm wondering if the Society would like them or could recommend another museum or historical society in the area that would be interested.”

Among the objects seen in the photos Susan attached to her email were four small ceramic figurines — a reclining housecat, a small whiskey jug, and two salt & pepper shakers that didn't match in style or finish. The final objects were two ceramic art tiles, both with what I would consider intentional distortions in line,

#### Further Reading: Leno Prestini.

“Burton Stewart & Leno Prestini's Memorial to the Big Smokestack at the Clayton Brickyard.”

— by Chuck Stewart —

Mortarboard #10, February 2009 — page 120 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 3.

[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_10\\_downsizingpageweb.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_10_downsizingpageweb.pdf)

“Z Canyon: Burton Stewart: Billy Jarrett, Leno Prestini — 1958.”

— by Chuck Stewart —

Mortarboard #21, January 2010 — page 271 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 6.

[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_21\\_downsizingpageweb.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_21_downsizingpageweb.pdf)

“I Heard from Leno Yesterday.”

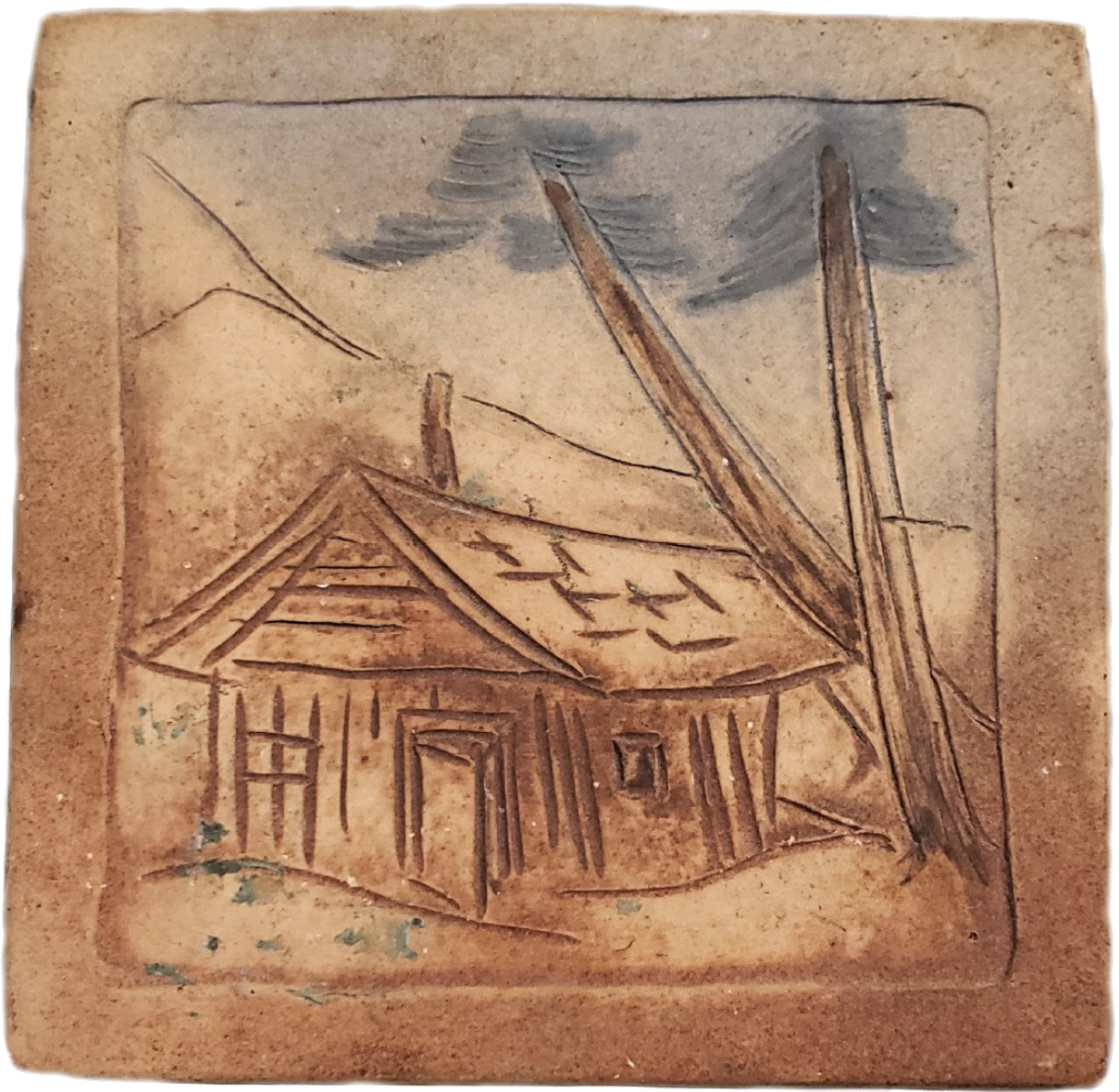
“Leno Prestini's experiences in WWII as told through letters from his friend, Burton Stewart, to Burton's fiancé — and later wife — Linda Kelso.”

— Compiled and edited by Chuck Stewart and Susan (Stewart) Rumble. —

Mortarboard #31, November 2010 — page 385 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 10.

[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_31\\_downsizingpageweb.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_31_downsizingpageweb.pdf)

Photo by Bill Sebright.



***WACO Art Tile from Burton Stewart Family Collection.***

***Dimensions: 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches. No apparent artist signature, front or reverse.***

form, and coloration suggesting a well-worn rusticity.

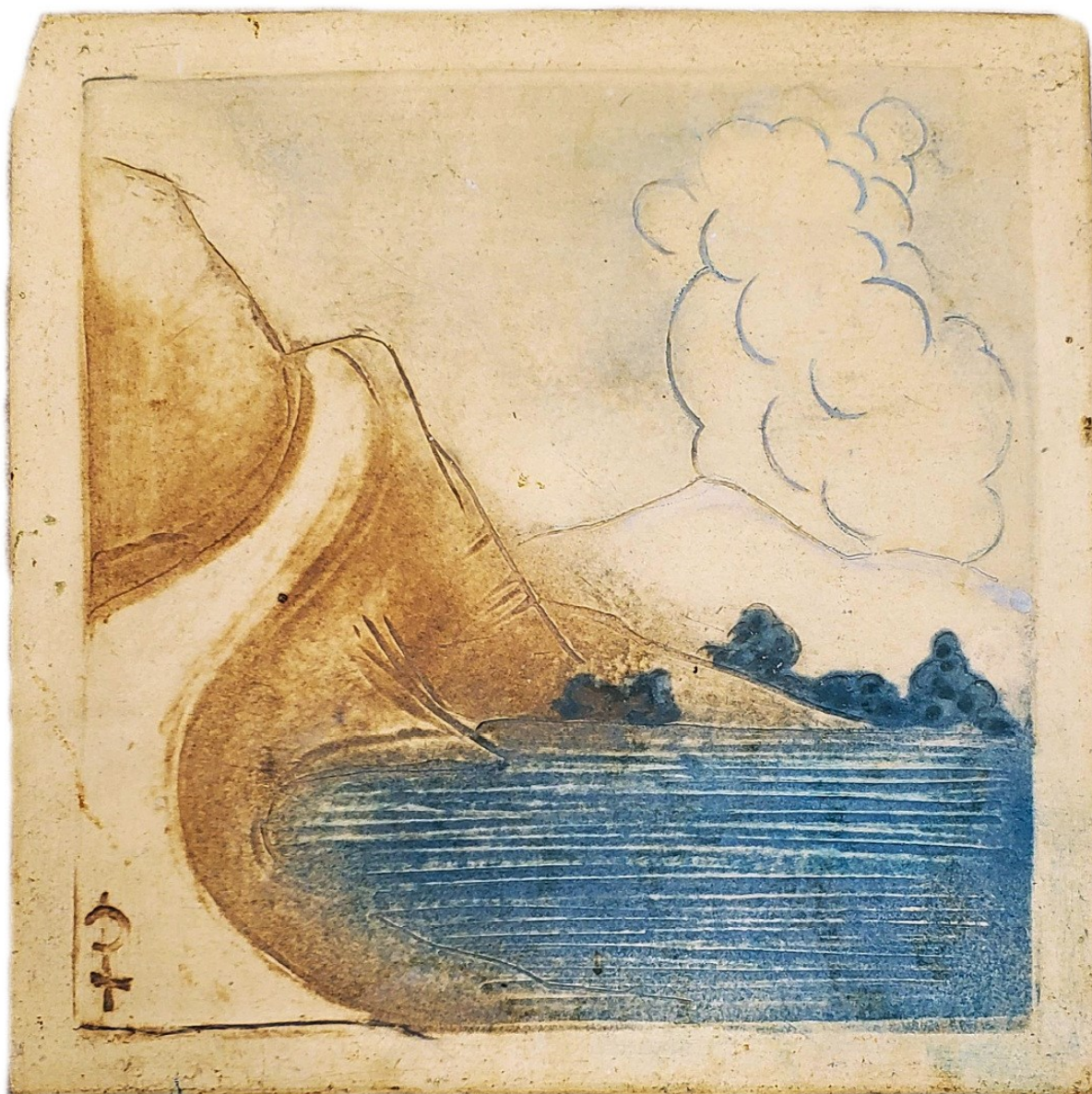
Considering the close personal friendship between the artist, Leno Prestini, and Chuck and Susan's dad, Burton Stewart, the family's suspicion that Leno might be the creator of these objects is certainly understandable. But the only marks suggesting a possible association with Leno and Clayton's terracotta factory was Washington Brick, Lime's "WACO" trademark pressed into the backs of both ceramic tiles.

Bill forwarded Susan's email and photos to me with the following missive. "I thought you might want to see this. She'll bring the artifacts down after the snow's gone."

In reply to Bill, I wrote, "It would certainly be worthwhile to obtain these objects — especially the tiles marked WACO." Art tiles produced by Washington Brick & Lime, because of the Clayton connection, would have an historic value within this community regardless of the artist that created them. Still, if they could be tied to Leno all the better.

In that regard I suggested, "Once we have the objects in hand, we could send detailed images to Ron Endlich for his evaluation. He may be able to compare them to similar items from his own collection or notice certain stylistic considerations evident from other works known to be Leno's."

*Photo by Bill Sebright.*



*WACO Art Tile from Burton Stewart Family Collection.*

*Dimensions: 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches. Leno Prestini's stylized monogram can be seen in the lower lefthand corner of the tile and enlarged below.*



Mr. Endlich lives and works in Seattle. Beyond his regular occupation, he's a tile historian and collector, and a writer on the subject in general who has along the way been researching the tiles produced by the Washington Brick & Lime Company — and the artists that created them — for the last fifteen year. In 2019 he extended to the Society the courtesy of reprinting an article he authored about the large pictorial mural fixed to the exterior wall near the entrance to Colville's County Courthouse — the creation of the ceramic art tiles composing said mural directly tied to Clayton's brickworks via

Photo by Bill Sebright.



**Susan (Stewart) Rumble.**  
**Susan holding the two art tiles in question.**

the artists known to have created those tiles, Cecil Sater and Leno Prestini. A link to that article is provided below.

The subject of Susan's pending donations lingered through the summer of 2023. And then, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, Bill emailed Ron and I the following. "I met with Susan Rumble this morning. Attached are pictures of the two tiles she gave the Society. Regarding the design in the lower lefthand corner of the larger one, any idea what that might stand for."

#### Further Reading.

**"A Hidden Gem: The WaCo Tile Mural at the Stevens County Courthouse."**

— by Ron Endlich —

**Mortarboard #137, September 2019 — page 1921 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 40.**

[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_137\\_web\\_pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_137_web_pdf)

Replying to both Bill and Ron, I wrote, "Regarding the up-pointing dagger piercing a reversed "C," I've reviewed a bunch of symbols — including some specific to editing and publishing — and am not seeing anything similar. It's probably pointless to speculate, but being on the front of the artifact might suggest it's the identifying mark of the artist."

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, Ron responded with an email of his own. He pointed out that the symbol might represent Leno's initials. The 'L' is there, though the stroke extending to the right to form the lower angle of the 'L' is also mirrored on the left. And the 'L's vertical stroke is extended below this horizontal stroke. Ron suggested that these alterations are intended to "represent a cross — and Leno's religious beliefs." The broken circle overlaying the upper reach of the 'L' represent Prestini, while the extension of the circle's broken arms to the left of the downward line is "a bit of artistic flourish."

After a little research, it appears that artists signing their work in the form of highly stylized monograms is well documented in the history of art. Considering that, I'm quite comfortable with Ron's interpretation.

In the mid-spring of this year, I began gathering the threads needed to write a paper on these tiles. On May 1<sup>st</sup> I sent the following email to Ron and Bill.

"I'm trying to put together a story regarding the Prestini tiles Susan Rumble donated to the Historical Society last year. My question is, did each begin as a flat-surfaced blank of clay into which the outline of a frame and the lines of the design were hand-scratched with some type of sculpting tool? In other words, do these appear to be unique one-off tiles, the design etched, and the glaze applied individually, or does it appear as if some type of mold was used to imprint the design, thereby allowing the creation of a multitude of identical pressings?"

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ron began his reply with the following confession, "I always like to talk about WaCo tiles!"

"The two tiles donated by Susan Rumble are great examples of Leno's work. Unlike the tiles seen in the WaCo catalog which were made from molds, I think these two are probably unique designs. I believe the production process

was as follows: starting with a soft clay blank, the design was incised (or etched) by hand (and tool) into the tile, fired, and then glaze colors were hand painted (or sponged) onto the tile and then fired a second time.

"I believe they (the Prestini tiles) were likely one-off tiles, but I suppose Leno could have repeated a similar hand-incised design on multiple blanks; each would be slightly different though. I have not seen any examples of repeat-

ed incised design tiles, however."

We do thank Susan and her family for these artifacts. They fit well in forwarding our long-term intention of ensuring Leno Prestini a significant place in the art history of our portion of Washington State.

We also wish to thank Ron Endlich yet again for the many times he's donated his expertise regarding such pieces of ceramic art.

## Courtship by Correspondence.

— Wally Lee Parker —

I'm not sure how I ran across this first clipping, but it was clearly something that needed to be pursued. Variants of this clipping appeared within a few days of each other in newspapers throughout southern and eastern states. This one was from the May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1894 edition of the *Pensacola News* Pensacola, Florida. It carried the dateline, "Princeton, Kentucky, May 31." To quote, "J. C. Boggs and Miss Celia Keys have just been married at Almo (Kentucky). The marriage was brought about through an advertisement on the part of the groom for a correspondent over a year ago. It was answered by Miss Keys. He is a resident of Deer Park, Washington, and neither had seen the other until the day before the marriage. Miss Keys is a daughter of C. B. Keys, Populist candidate for congress in this district."

The April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1896 edition of the *Spokesman-Review*, under the heading "Settlers Receive Patents," notes, "A list of land patents, granted under the homestead laws, has been received at the United States Land Office in Spokane, as follows ..." Among them the following, "John C. Boggs, Deer Park."

And then the *Review's* October 14<sup>th</sup> edition, under "Real Estate Transfers," posted the following. "The Spokane Abstract Company,

*Jamison building, reported the following transfers of real estate filed with the county auditor."* Third on the list, "J. C. and Celia K. Boggs to George P Holden, Jr., s/2 of ne 1/4, and lots 1 & 2, section 2, township 28, range 42."

I think the south half of the northeast one quarter of the mile square constituting section 2 comes to 80 acres. The two lots mentioned above appear to be blocks of land possibly containing 25 acres each. If this interpretation is correct, we're looking at about 130 acres of land centered approximately three-quarters of a mile east by northeast of downtown Deer Park's intersection of Main Street and Crawford Avenue.

The next trace found of John and Celia dates to February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1904. It's a birth return downloaded from Washington State's Digital Archive. It indicates that a male child, no first name stated, was born to 37-year-old Celia Keys — as common on these reports, that being her maiden name. It also notes that Celia was born in Kentucky. The father was given as 41-year-old John C. Boggs, his birthplace, Indiana, his occupation "general labor." The record indicates that this was Celia's second child, and that the child was born in Deer Park, the attending physician, H. H. Slater.

Also downloaded from the Washington

## Help Wanted!



The society has a number of positions that need to be filled by creative ladies and gentlemen — those being —

Vice-President, Publicist, Director of Fundraising, Curator and/or Archivist.

If you'd be interested in any of these positions, contact the society.

State Digital Archive was a death certificate for John C. Boggs, this dated November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1916. The information on the certificate was provided by Mrs. Celia K. Boggs. The couple were living at 1902 East Riverside Avenue, Spokane. His occupation was listed as railroad foreman, and the cause of death, cancer. On November 24<sup>th</sup> the *Deer Park Union* carried this. “J. C. Boggs, a prominent member of the Modern Woodmen of America lodge, and a former resident here, died in Spokane early Tuesday morning after a lingering illness.”

The December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1942 edition of the

*Spokesman-Review* reported the following. “Boggs, Celia Keys — Passed away December 22<sup>nd</sup> at a local hospital. Her home was at E2427 Second, having resided in Spokane the past 26 years. Survived by two sons, Paul and Ben Boggs, both of Spokane; one sister, Mrs. Opal Keys Blakely of Hazel, Kentucky.”

As of this point there doesn't appear to be any connection between the above John C. Boggs family and the other Boggs families living in this area.

## ***Leno Prestini: Pioneer Era Deer Park as Seen Through the Eyes of the Artist.***

— Wally Lee Parker —

*... open to negotiations ...*

In early October of 2023, an individual requesting anonymity informed our society's president, Bill Sebright, that he (or she) owned a Leno Prestini painting most people were likely unfamiliar with. Society member Mike Reiter secured a photo for our archives, and Bill sent me an email containing said image. In his note Bill asked, “Have you seen this painting before?” My answer was no — at least not that I recalled, but it did resemble several vintage photographs, one from the society's Zimmerer collection, the other taken at a somewhat later date — several months or several years — from the same general viewpoint and preserved on a vintage postcard. Bill went on, “*The Arcadia Orchards office is to the right. But I don't remember seeing the gray building to the left. Was it really there, or just part of Leno's imagination?*” Then he added, “*The rest of the painting seems fairly accurate.*”

Having been involved with our historical society's research into all kinds of subjects for the last twenty years, I agreed with Bill's assessment as to the painting's accuracy—and would add that in my opinion this work is among Leno's best. I also had an answer regarding the building to the left. More about that later.

Our assumption was that the historic fidelity in Leno's painting was drawn from vintage photographs — likely the very ones we were familiar with. That was confirmed when

we ran across this article in the *Tri-County Tribune's* October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1960 edition. The header to the article read, “*Newest Painting by Local Artist,*” while the text beneath the photo said, “*Clayton artist Leno Prestini recently completed the above painting of Deer Park's main street as it looked a half century ago. Using early day photos to guide his memory, Prestini has used lively colors in depicting the scene. The painting is displayed in the office of Crandall's Insurance in Deer Park.*” Though after scanning from a microfilm archive the newspaper's image was highly degraded, enough came through to suggest it was the painting under discussion.

For a number of years Leno's artwork had been enhancing the walls of quite a few businesses in both Deer Park and Clayton. And sometimes there would be a small white card tucked between frame and canvas in a lower corner of certain paintings stating a price — likely negotiable. Back then those prices weren't ridiculous — maybe enough to buy several dozen tubes of quality oil paint. But the paintings didn't seem to sell, possibly because so many of his otherwise more traditional and less avant-garde works contained bits of pictorial oddities — visual quirks of an editorial nature that, though often small, in too many instances seemed to draw attention away from the rest of the imagery. Once you saw such a quirk, you couldn't unsee it.

On the other hand, back then this was primarily a farming and working-class communi-



***“Old Deer Park, 1910”***  
 — by Leno Prestini —

ty. Art is nice, but tends to be way down on the list of must-haves for working people.

That may be the reason that at least a few of Leno’s nicest paintings were those that moved into private hands to settle debts Leno had incurred or was about to incur. In at least some of those cases, the intended subject matter was settled before Leno applied brush to canvas. For example, society member Mike Reiter recalls a conversation with Jannis Snook in which she revealed that her husband, Dean, the long-time doctor at Deer Park’s veterinary clinic, agreed to take a painting in return for treating Leno’s dog. As part of that barter, Dr. Snook gave Leno the specific instruction that he was “not to paint anything weird.” To see the paint-

ing resulting from that negotiation, follow the link in the “Further Reading” box below.

*... a crisply inviting view of old Deer Park ...*

We do know a few things about the history of Leno’s “Old Deer Park, 1910.” Several years after Leno’s death — that in April of 1963 — his older brother, Battista, built the Prestini Memorial Museum in this immigrant family’s hometown of Clayton, Washington. The museum had about 70 of Leno’s paintings on display. Battista created a guidebook for visitors to the museum that included whatever backstory he could recall for the various pieces of artwork shown, including those only on loan to the muse-

***Further Reading.***

***Find “Prestini’s Autumn” in Mortarboard Issue #142’s “Bouquets & Brickbats” column.***  
 — by Wally Lee Parker —

***Mortarboard #142, February 2020 — page 2020 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 41.***  
[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_142\\_web\\_.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_142_web_.pdf)





***Deer Park — circa 1908.***  
 — *Image from the Zimmerer collection.* —

um. That book, along with most (if not all) of the Prestini Museum's artwork now resides in the Stevens County Historical Society's Museum at Colville.

Battista's book included an entry about a painting he referred to as "*Deer Park 1910.*" He noted, "*This painting is on loan (to the museum)*

*by the Crandall Insurance Company.*" According to Battista, Charles Crandall had begged Leno to paint him a picture. As payment Battista indicated that Charles covered the insurance cost on Leno's little Volkswagen Karmann Ghia convertible — presumably for a negotiated period. At the end of Battista's handwritten recollection,

***Deer Park — circa 1911.***  
 — *Image from a vintage postcard.* —



there's a small, penciled addition saying the painting "Has been returned" — doubtless to Crandall's office.

After Leno's stylized signature, the date of the painting's completion — 1960 — was added in the lower righthand corner. The first written record currently known regarding this painting was the previously mentioned article and photo in the October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1960 edition of Deer Park's *Tri-County Tribune*.

### ... the Gonzaga showing ...

On the Friday of the following week, the *Spokesman-Review* carried an article saying, in part, "A special display of 50 oil paintings by a Clayton, Wash., bricklayer (will be) on view at Crosby Memorial Library on the Gonzaga University campus." The next day's edition of the *Spokane Chronicle* — that of November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1960 — added, "For Prestini, the exhibition of his work that opens Tuesday (November 8<sup>th</sup>) in the Crosby Library will mean the realization of an ambition he has nurtured for 20 years ..... the desire to have a formal exhibition of his work." Then a bit later in the article was a quote attributed to the Rev. Louis St. Marie, S. J., an associate Professor of English at Gonzaga. Regarding Leno, he said, "He is a true primitive, self-made and independent of the world of art, past or present. He is a homespun philosopher. He loves his country, and he knows it physically and historically."

Several things in the above article should be clarified. First, this wasn't the first time Leno's works had been shown in a formal setting, though it may have been the first time he was considered the primary artist being shown. And secondly, it appears likely that only 19 of the 50 paintings at that Gonzaga showing were Leno's.

If this interpretation of the available documentation is correct, it didn't seem to lessen the enthusiasm of those interested in such things, as suggested by this announcement from the November 24<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Spokane Chronicle*. "Popular acceptance of the paintings of Leno Prestini, Clayton artist, has resulted in a decision to extend the showing of his work in the Crosby Library through January 8<sup>th</sup>."

The *Spokesman-Review*'s January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1961 edition carried an article bylined by Bill Boni — a writer with that newspaper from 1952 until 1961. Mr. Boni wrote, "Last Sunday a two-month exhibit of 50 of his works closed at Gonzaga University's Crosby Library, and on January 20 those same 50 paintings will go on show

in the Colville City Hall." That showing was scheduled to run through January 29<sup>th</sup>, and it appears it closed on the date scheduled.

Regarding the number of Leno's works shown at Gonzaga, via a letter posted to David Kingma — then lay archivist for the Jesuit Oregon Province Archive at Gonzaga University — I was able to obtain a copy of the contents of the showing's handout, along with a limited permission to reprint the same in the second issue the historical society's then new newsletter, the *Mortarboard*. That permission did not allow for an online posting — meaning print only — so direct quotes from the Gonzaga material were excised from the *Mortarboard*'s online version. Anyone wishing to read the full document will need to obtain a print copy from the society.

The thing is the program only lists the following 19 of Leno's works.

The Last Buffalo. (1959)  
Old Deer Park. 1910. (1960)  
Lost Dutchman. (1960)  
Footprints in the Dust. (1945)  
Dutchman's Gold. (1960)  
Fantasy. (no date)  
Old Red Mill. (1958)  
Winter Night. (1959)  
Autumn Idyll. (1960)  
Unhappy Cure. (1960)  
So Late. (1952)  
Line Cabin. (1946)  
Dollar Sign. (1959)  
Rainbow Trail. (1952)  
Matador. (1954)  
Doors of Life. (1957)  
War Pony. (1959)  
Depression. 1933. (1937)  
Shifting, Whispering Sands. (1955)

We can safely assume that all the names listed are ones Leno himself approved of — meaning "Old Deer Park, 1910" was an acceptable name for the painting in question. As for the other 31 paintings not listed, it would be reasonable to assume there were other artists in the show as well, but that detail, since it wasn't relevant to the immediate subject, was overlooked by those writing newspaper accounts of the event.

### ... almost accepted by the art community ...

As to prior showings of his work, in October of 1938, with supportive funding supplied by the depression era's Work Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, the Spokane Art

*“Page 1939” — Leno Prestini — 1939.  
Original painting in the Stevens County Historical Society’s Prestini collection.*





*"Page 1940" — Leno Prestini — 1940.  
Original painting in the Stevens County Historical Society's Prestini collection*

Center was founded, its office and gallery at North 106 Monroe. The first mention of the new art center that included Leno's name appeared in the November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940 issue of the *Spokane Chronicle*.

Under the title "*Display of Art Proves Popular*," it was reported that the Spokane Art Center had placed over 275 pieces of art on sale in the "*first major attempt in this part of the country to bring works of art into homes at prices the average citizen can afford*."

A portion of the article explained that "*One of the most ambitious undertakings is a large panel in oil by Leno Prestini, a gifted Italian artist who lives at Deer Park. It is titled 'Page 1939,' (see page 61) and is intended to portray world history during 1939. In the foreground is shown a table on which are resting five hands carrying poised pens as if preparing to sign a treaty. From the sleeve of one of the signers protrudes a menacing pistol. Also on the table, as if spilled from a dice cup, are a pair of dice, a symbolic umbrella, a floating mine and other articles. In the background, behind a sea on which a submarine cruises beside a sinking ship, are a row of dead soldiers disappearing into the distance. An iron cross is shown hanging from the fingers of the first. Above the entire scene death flies at the machine gun of an airplane and the smoldering ruins of buildings flank the dead soldiers.*"

The article went on to note that Leno had also included "several" of his kiln-fired "sculptures" in the show.

And then the November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1941 issue of the *Spokesman-Review* — just 21 days before the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor — carried this headline, "*Big Art Show Opens Monday*." And followed with, "*The Spokane Art Center ... bustled ... with preparations to house one of its largest and most unusual exhibits ... the second annual art fair*."

This inclusion was found within the article. "*Among the repeat performers is Leno Prestini, a self-taught artist from Clayton, whose unusual oil paintings attracted so much attention last year. Similar in subject and tone to last year's much-discussed 'Page 1939' is one of Prestini's oil entries, 'Page 1940,' (see facing page) a large symbolic painting of the year's historic events and leaders.*"

"*Prestini will also exhibit a striking painting of 'Civilization,' (see page 64) depicting the struggle of a caveman with technological warfare.*"

The next thing found is a photograph of Leno in a business suit standing beside the seven

-foot-high canvas of his painting '*Civilization*.' This appeared in the March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1942 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*. The photo-caption reads, "*Leno Prestini points out complicated headgear of flame-and-gas-breathing robot, representing the totalitarian war machine in his 'Page 1936,' a modernistic-futuristic combine of what has and what is to come in combat.*" There's no accompanying article. Just the photo and its caption.

Much closer to home, the May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1942 edition of the *Deer Park Union*, under the heading "*Prestini Displays Picture 1941*," (see page 65) carried its own interpretation of the latest of Leno's painting.

"*Leno Prestini, Clayton artist, hung his most recent work, 'Page 1941,' in the Clayton Café Saturday night.*"

"*The picture rather defies a word description and must be seen and studied to be appreciated. Like his previous pictorial recordings of history, the new scene contains much too much to be absorbed at a glance, or to be described in a column of type.*"

"*In general, the theme deals with America and her struggle for the cause of liberty. Events, both foreign and domestic, leading up to our entrance in the war are depicted.*"

"*The entire picture is built around a big wheel of progress with the inscription 'Wake Up.' In front of the wheel stands the Statue of Liberty, encircled in chains and a demon tearing at her throat. The serpent-like demon had crawled up over the stones of politics, fear, mistakes, complacency, strikes, prejudice, and (the) Monroe Doctrine.*"

"*Surrounding the central image are scenes portraying Japan biting her own wrist by stabbing Pearl Harbor, while the diplomatic high hat is being tipped in Washington; the suffering of the rest of the world; and the struggle that the president has been waging to forge a strong nation, against odds and opposition from many quarters.*"

"*Prestini had recently gained wide publicity by displaying some of these works in southern California.*"

A bit over a decade later, under the date-line "*Clayton, Wash., Feb. 9*," this appeared in the February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1953 issue of the *Spokesman-Review*. "*Lino Prestini, local artist, has returned from a five-week tour of art centers in California. He also spent a week in Mexico City, visiting the museum of fine arts, and saw famous collections of art while there. He was impressed by the beautiful marble work and the*"

**Text continued on page 66.**



*“Civilization” or “Page 1936” or “The Mechanical Monster” — Leno Prestini — 1936.  
Original painting in the Stevens County Historical Society’s Prestini collection*

*"Page 1941" — Leno Prestini — 1941.  
Original painting in the Stevens County Historical Society's Prestini collection*



***Text continued from page 63.***

*skillfully constructed buildings in this quaint old city.”*

***... Leno as uranium prospector ...***

Several years later another mention of Leno occurred in a Spokane newspaper, this time the September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1955 issue of the *Chronicle*. Under the lead “‘26 Mine Claims Filed Near Waitts,” the newspaper reported that the above claims were filed at Colville two days earlier, all of them located within several sections south of Waitts Lake — Waitts Lake being 12 miles northwest of Loon Lake. Nine claim “locators” were listed, one being “*Leno Prestini, Clayton.*”

The above article didn’t state what mineral was being claimed. However, the December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1958 issue of the *Spokesman-Review* carried an ad stating a prospectus was available regarding “400,000 Shares Blue Star Mining & Survey Corporation Common Stock, Price \$.25 per Share.” It listed eight individuals from whom said prospectus could be obtained. Four of said individuals, Leno included, were among the claim “locators” listed in 1955.

As for the mineral or minerals being targeted by the Blue Star Mining & Survey Corporation in 1958, it seemed that during that decade more than one corporation was formed to lease, for stipulated periods, willing landowners’ mineral rights on a speculative basis — the agreed upon mineral being uranium. And in fact, we found the necessary confirmation regarding uranium in an article published just a week prior to the above-mentioned Blue Star Mining ad.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1958, the *Spokesman-Review’s* then Sunday supplement — the *Inland Empire Magazine* — carried an interview with Leno Prestini conducted and written by “*Pat Graham of Colville.*” As an addendum of sorts to the end of Mr. Graham’s full-page article, the author added, “*Leno is a member of the Blue Star Mining and Survey Corporation which has uranium claims in Eastern Washington.*”

The above quote is only an addendum to Mr. Graham’s article. The actual subject of the article was Leno Prestini as an artist. And there-within Mr. Graham gave his interpretation of the

series of oversize canvases that gained Leno at least a degree of recognition within the wider world.

Leno noted that it was his response to the onrushing nightmare of World War II — the inevitability of which was actually apparent to quite a few people as of 1936 — that he began his first painting, the image known variously as *The Mechanical Monster, Civilization, or Page 1936*. As to Leno’s motivation for turning that canvass into an ongoing project, Mr. Graham quoted him as saying, “*I had my own ideas and feelings. I wanted to put them into a painting.*”

***... the art of remembering ...***

And that brings us back to the painting that began this discussion, 1960’s “*Old Deer Park, 1910.*”

A valid question would be whether any of the elements Leno added to his “*Old Deer Park*” painting that weren’t in the photographs could have been drawn from his own memory. That’s unlikely. Luigi Prestini, left his young family behind when he immigrated from the family’s hometown of Besano in northwestern Italy. He landed in America on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 1906. Luigi’s sons, Battista and Leno, were born in Besano on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1904 and February 4<sup>th</sup> of 1906 respectively. Luigi’s wife Caterina, and the couple’s sons — the older three years and seven months old at the time, and the younger, two years and three months — landed in New York on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, 1908. For the first few years the family stayed among other Italian immigrants in Barre, Vermont, where the kids’ father — this according to Battista’s writings — had been working as a stone cutter since his own immigration.

It appears the family moved to a farm north of Spokane in 1911, and then on to Clayton about 1912, where Luigi gained employment at Washington Brick & Lime’s brickworks.

Leno’s year of immigration, 1908, was the same year construction on the Olson Hotel — the large multistory brick structure seen on the right side of Leno’s painting, as well as in the two images it’s believed he worked from — was finished. That gives us the lower date for the city the artist represented in his painting.

***Further Reading.***

***“Coming to America: The Prestini Family & the Immigrant Experience.”***

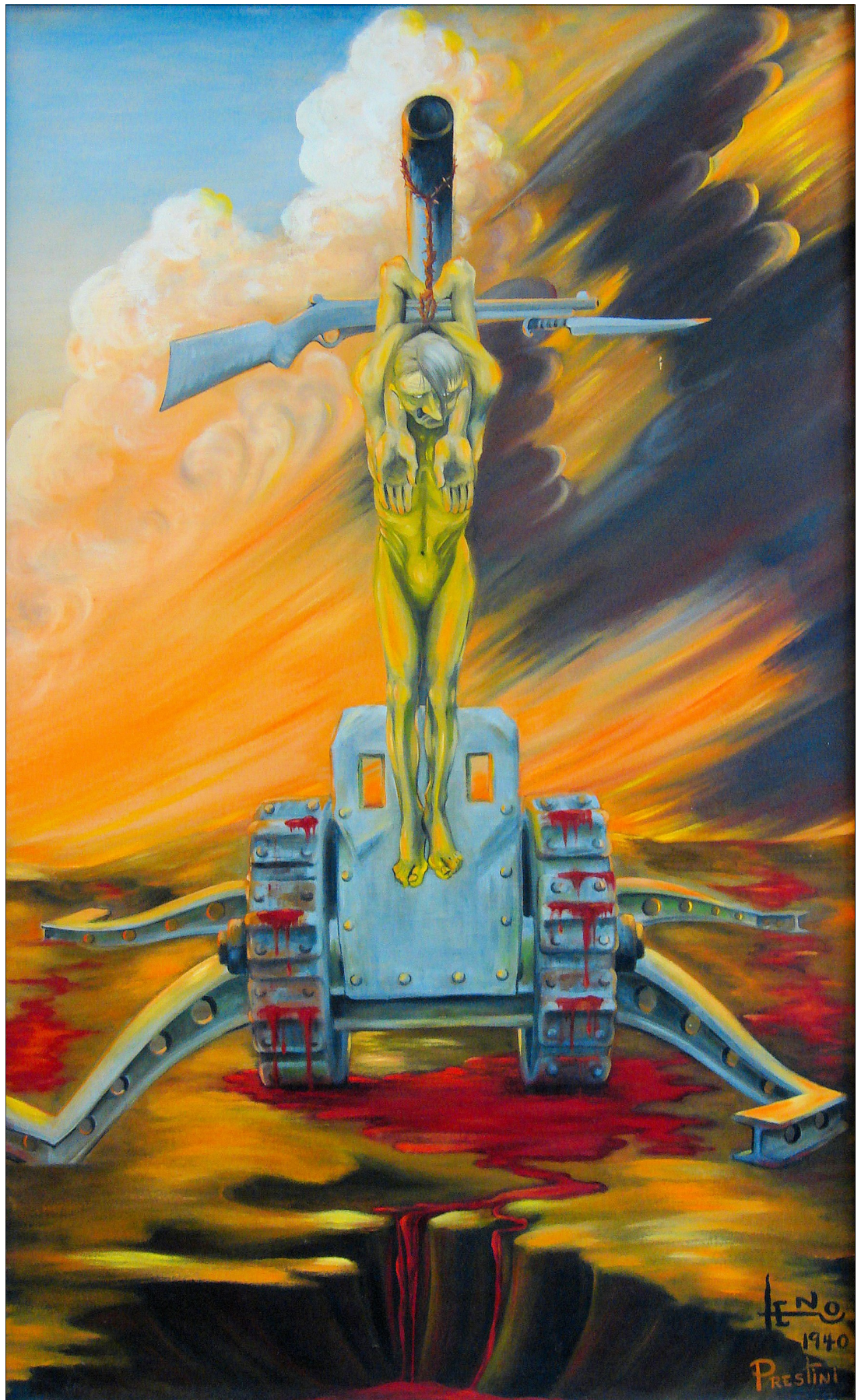
***— by Wally Lee Parker —***

***Mortarboard #17, September 2009 — page 213 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 5.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_17\\_downsinglespageweb.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_17_downsinglespageweb.pdf)***



*“Inevitable Doom!” — Leno Prestini — 1940. An image predicting Adolph Hitler’s fate.  
Original painting in the Stevens County Historical Society’s Prestini collection*



At this point I'll need to use some arithmetic. Can we assume a person born sometime in 1888 is likely to have turned 20 in 1908 — essentially becoming an adult who, if residing in Deer Park at that time, could be expected to have a reasonably good memory of what Deer Park was like in 1908? Leno would have turned 54 in February of 1960, the year “*Old Deer Park*” was painted. Those born in 1888 would reach their 72<sup>nd</sup> birthdays throughout that year. If there were any details regarding vintage Deer Park's appearance that Leno felt he needed to check, it seems he would have been able to find at least a few eyewitnesses old enough to remember at least some of those details.

All that considered, Leno grew up when most roads were unpaved, and often poorly maintained. Electricity, which tended to be intermittent at best, seldom extending beyond a village's borders to reach even nearby farms. Radios were something of a luxury, with most entertainment being homemade. Automobiles often required more attention than the horses they were intended to replace. And life for most could at best be called unrelentingly inconvenient — although when looking back at things passed, such negative observations can easily be smothered beneath the warm glow of nostalgia.

### ... impressions of “*Old Deer Park, 1910*” ...

This painting is a view of Deer Park that our knowledge of the era implies is reasonably representative of the town between 1908 and the end of the First World War. That's not to suggest it's an accurate visual representation. After all, Leno is an artist, and artists, when distorting lines and hues, are clearly claiming the same type of license poets use when twisting language in pursuit of something more than common words alone can say.

This is Deer Park as viewed when looking north on Main Street, from a position somewhat elevated and just to the north of the point at which the Spokane Falls & Northern Railway had laid its mainline tracks across what, within a few years, would become Main Street. The sidewalks, where existent, were still primarily wooden — though we believe that was changing to concrete in a spotty manner. It appears that

snowmelt and rainwater collecting in the streets was carried away by shallow ditches just beyond the edges of the sidewalks. Leno shows planks for pedestrians bridging the shallow ditches at corners, some ditches sprouting a crop of well-watered weeds. And, since this was still a horsedrawn world, hitching posts were common.

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1907, the *Spokane Chronicle* reported that the year-old Arcadia Irrigation Association (aka Corporation or Company) had announced “*a dam 14 feet high will be built across the flat which is known as the Standard Lumber Company's pasture lot. This will get a large supply of water from the two creeks which meet at about this point.*” The larger of the two water sources was Dragoon Creek, the smaller Spring Creek.

This proposed dam had two purposes; it would raise the level of the water being withheld high enough to divert a portion of it through Deer Park at approximately street level — that to supply water for the Arcadia's irrigation needs south of town through a system of flumes and pipes later referred to as the Low-Line Canal, and also so the impounded water could serve as a millpond for the above noted Standard Lumber Company. The new sawmill built beside the pond is long gone, but the impoundment of Dragoon Creek water, at least partially, continues, the results referred to as Dragoon Lake.

Take note of the fact that this was prior to the Arcadia's second massive project, that involving drawing irrigation water from Loon Lake and distributing it through what would be called the company's High-Line Canal.

The fact that Deer Park's streets were still composed of dirt was likely a good thing when the April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1908 issue of the *Spokane Chronicle* noted that “*The Arcadia Irrigation Company has filed a petition with the county commissioners for a franchise to lay a pipeline through the town of Deer Park for irrigation purposes.*”

What “*purposes*” was explained in a *Chronicle* article published after the project was completed in late September. To quote, “*The company is irrigating several thousand acres of land, three to six miles south and east of Deer Park.*”

On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May, 1908, the *Chroni-*

### ***Further Reading About Old Deer Park.***

***“The Deer Park Hotel.”***

***— by Pete Coffin —***

***Mortarboard #145, May 2020 — page 2065 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 42.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_145\\_\\_web\\_.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_145__web_.pdf)***

cle reported that the irrigation company “has started in with a large force of men and teams to construct a box flume through the streets of the town to connect the irrigation ditch from the dam at the north edge of town and the irrigation ditch leading to their property south of town.”

The May 29<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Spokesman-Review* reported the following changes had been made to the planned dam. “The concrete dam will be over 400 feet long and 22 feet high at the highest place.” With the pond covering 12 acres.

The September 24<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Chronicle* carries a description of the water’s course through Deer Park that explains why no evidence of it is seen in the streets of Leno’s painting — or in the vintage photos he used for reference. When the newspaper indicated that the ditch had been completed and the water to the orchards south of town was flowing, it added that, “the ditch passes through the middle of town about eight feet below the surface of the street” — those several blocks of subterranean waterway being accomplished through a fairly large diameter wooden pipe — those being replaced with cast concrete pipes a few years later.

It should also be noted that once the underground pipe had passed beneath the streets of downtown’s business district, the water was electrically pumped up into an overhead flume,

assumedly to clear a the mild rise in ground level to the south, said level then dropping downward to the Arcadia’s southern orchards.

To get a better visualization of the water’s path under Deer Park, check out issue #75 of the Historical Society’s former newsletter, the *Mortarboard* — a link to the society’s online copy is provided below.

The most prominent building in Leno’s painting is the multistory Olson Hotel — aka the Deer Park Hotel. Regarding said building, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1908, under the heading “New Store for Deer Park: Olson Mercantile Company to Begin Erection of Brick Building,” and the dateline “Deer Park, Wash., May 8.” the *Spokesman-Review* reported that, “The Olson Mercantile Company yesterday finished the removal of its frame building to the back (south end) of the lots on which it was situated, to make room for a new two-story 50x110 (foot) brick store to be erected immediately. When the building is complete, in July, this firm will put in a large stock of general merchandise and a butcher shop. The old building will be used as a warehouse.”

As seen in Leno’s painting and confirmed by the vintage photos he used as reference, the hotel is actually three-stories high.

Since it wasn’t mentioned whether the hotel also has a basement, I emailed Mike Reiter, Society member and former city employee, now retired. Mike replied, “There is a basement, although it isn’t finished. You can see the huge floor beams and vertical support beams. If I recall correctly, it’s pretty much all a dirt floor. The basement runs from the wall abutting the foundation of the old Antler Café building to the south, all the way north to Crawford Street. I used to have to go down there every month to read the water meter before they went to radio readers. There’s some junk stored, but nothing of any interest. Not very well lit. Kind of creepy. There used to be steel access doors in the sidewalk on Main Street, probably for delivering coal or wood for the furnace.”

The snippets on the next page are enlargements from the upper image found on page 59. The foreground building is the original Olson Mercantile, apparently back in business at this further-south location while waiting for the brick building to be completed. The south side



**Snippet view “Old Deer Park, 1910.”**

**The wood-framed Arcadia Orchards office building — formerly Olson’s Mercantile — in the foreground, with the new multistory brick walled Olson Hotel just beyond.**

**Further Reading About Old Deer Park.**

**100 year old Arcadia Artifact Uncovered During Recent Work in Downtown Deer Park.**

— by Wally Lee Parker —

**Mortarboard #75, July 2014 — page 909 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 19.**

[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard\\_issue\\_75\\_singlepage.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard_issue_75_singlepage.pdf)

of the wood-frame building is acting as a billboard with the store's name written large. Also advertised is a specific brand of flour. The image of a flour sack is painted on the building's side, with the words "Fancy Patent" added to the upper part of the bag. An article in the October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1924 issue of *The American Miller* explains that the term patent flour "is an American term that came into use as a result of an improvement in milling machinery about 1870, when a device known as the Middlings Purifier was perfected, which enabled the fine fibrous material and flour dust to be removed by means of air currents from the hard granular middlings or intermediate flour masses."

In other words, air currents were used to blow the smaller, lighter particles of ground wheat aside for capture as a mean of separating this more desirable portion of the grindings hereafter called Patent Flour from the larger, cruder portions left behind by the air currents.

The lower image on page 59 is believed to date to 1911 or somewhat after. The snippets

of that photo below highlight several changes between this and the 1908 image. As earlier newspapers had suggested, the intent was for Olson's Mercantile to move onto a portion of the new hotel's ground floor after construction was done — leaving the old building in its new location as the Mercantile's warehouse. Peter Coffin's research indicates it was 1911 when the warehouse was taken over by the Arcadia Orchards Company as its office — a sign to such effect displayed prominently above the building's front entrance, seen in the circa 1911 photo.

Also of note in the 1911 photo is the addition of awnings to the west side entrances of both the hotel and the Arcadia's office. These changes are reflected in Leno's painting.

The foreground building on the left side of Leno's painting is identified in Pete Coffin's May 2020 *Mortarboard* article about the Olson Hotel as being the property of one of early Deer Park's real estate developers, Jeff Moore. A link to the above noted article can be found on the bottom of page 68. In 1908 this building was a



**Deer Park — circa 1908.**  
— See complete image on page 59. —



**Deer Park — circa 1911.**  
— See complete image on page 59. —



tavern, possibly known as the Owl Saloon. Moore also owned the Commercial Hotel on the south side of Crawford, just west of the railroad tracks — that in an area platted as Moore’s Addition. In November of 1914, Washington State voted to go dry — this prohibition to be enforced statewide beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1916. By or maybe even somewhat before that date, Moore’s saloon was renamed Deer Park Billiards Hall. A photo taken during Deer Park’s first Armistice Day celebration affirms that. Said photo can be seen in the first of the two February 2022 *Mortarboard* articles linked below.

Another clip from Leno’s “*Old Deer Park*” painting is pasted below. This segment shows Moore’s Saloon. Looking between the

northeast edge of the saloon and the electrical power pole just to the right of that, you’ll see a green splotch on the surface of Crawford Street. This represents something not seen in the 1908 or 1911 photos, quite simply because it didn’t exist when those photos were taken.

Another thing seen in Leno’s painting, but not evident in the photos, is that Crawford Street is extra wide after crossing Main Street — that extra width evident only on the south side of Crawford. This extra width resulted in the front of the saloon and the small building to its immediate west being recessed from their expected alignment. Across Crawford to the north was, and still is, the Kelly Building. West of the Kelly Building was the Great Northern Railroad depot.

The city fathers of that era felt the passengers departing the railroad depot, as they walk from Crawford to Main Street, might have a better impression of the town if something were done to beautify the area. Their solution was to utilize Crawford’s extra width at that point by adding a greenspace, and a little later a fountain. A common name for the area became City Fountain Square. On Armistice Day, 1918, Leno would have been just a few months shy of 13 years old. And though he lived in Clayton, would likely have been aware of Deer Park’s fountain — something his parents likely told him any number of towns in Italy treasured. At this point we’ve yet to find exactly when the square and its fountain were removed. But it’s clear that Leno remembered it being there — or at least recalled the stories the old-timers told.

To aid in visualizing all this, on page 72 find a snippet from 1915’s Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Deer Park. If you’re interested in reading the C/DPHS article this map was copied from, check the further reading box below.

Another question involves what appears to be electrical power poles in the vintage photos, as well as Leno’s painting. And whether there was any possibility telephone wires might have been strung throughout downtown as well.

Regarding telephones, we found this in the October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908 issue of the *Spokesman-Review*. “*The Farmers’ Telephone Company is planning to extend its line, connecting Milan,*



***Deer Park — circa 1908.***  
— See complete painting on page 58. —



***Further Reading About Old Deer Park.***

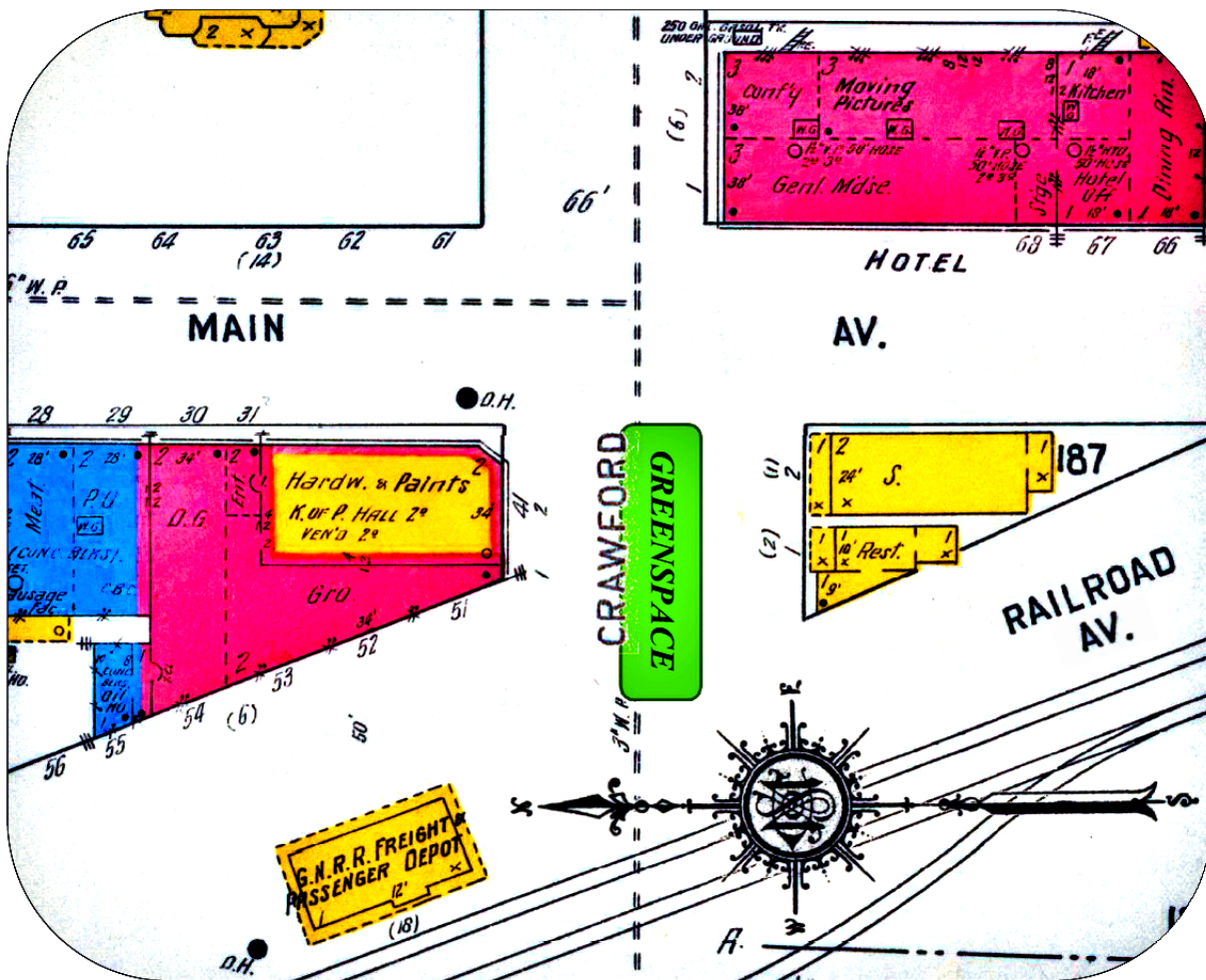
***From Wally Lee Parker’s “Letters, Email, Bouquets & Brickbats” column.***

***“Images of Armistice Day — 1918” — see page 2472.***

***“Pinning Down City Fountain Square” — see page 2477.***

***Mortarboard #166, February 2022 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 50.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_166\\_web.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_166_web.pdf)***



***This is a Snippet of 1915's Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Deer Park Showing the Intersection of Main Street and Crawford.***

*This map was copied from a Letters/Brickbats Article published in the Mortarboard's February 2022 edition (#166) — see "Further Reading" box, page 71. The area marked "greenspace" is a later overlay to the map intended to suggest the location and approximate size of a curbed and planted area known as City Fountain Square. The structures on the southwest corner of the intersection are Jeff Moore's Saloon and just to the west of that a restaurant. The map clearly shows the likely otherwise-intended setbacks that gave sufficient room for the Square to be added.*

*Westbranch and Chattaroy to Deer Park."*

And then this, also in the Review, dated "Deer Park, Wash., Dec, 22. — A great amount of trouble has been experienced during the last week with the electric lights, which are furnished from the powerhouse on the Little Spokane River south of Milan, and business houses dependent upon the current have had to use coal oil lamps. An effort has been made to put in a local system, but the city council has not granted the necessary franchise."

Leno's inclusion of utility poles in his painting is consistent with the photo images of that period. For those that might like to look a

little deeper into that, at the end of this piece I'll include a set of links to past articles on electricity and telephones in Deer Park.

*... finding Leno ...*

Like many of the Society's projects over the years, our attempts to record the history of Leno Prestini have proven an ongoing task. As we learn new things, and those discoveries are added to our archives, we often find ourselves reevaluating and updating our prior understandings — that being the proper thing for historians to do. That aspect of our approach to history

bears a fundamental similarity to the scientific method in that both these things are very much an ongoing argument, constrained within rules of civility, and intended to develop evidence that leads toward a generalized consensus. But despite all the bits and pieces gathered so far, so much more is needed before we really, if ever, understand Leno Prestini. And that seems to be the case with most true artists. So much about them remains inexplicable.

Among the things that strike me about the painting listed on the program for 1960's Gonzaga showing as "*Old Deer Park, 1910*," it seems to be one of the most calm and restful of Leno's works. And unfamiliar examples of this type of his work are always a joy to find.

Yes, he reportedly did say that he

wouldn't sell any of his paintings, apparently having no desire to do so since he only painted as a hobby. But that would only be true if he were excluding bartering simply because the exchange didn't involve money.

It seems some of the best examples of his works have somehow — money or otherwise — found their way into private hands. Those cherished heirlooms seldom expressing Leno's more Avant-Garde, more experimental tendencies. Such grounded images often draw the viewer into a place they would very much like to visit. In that sense "*Old Deer Park*" is a window into one of Leno's more inviting dreams.

### ***Further Reading: Bringing Electricity and Telephones to Deer Park.***

***"Electric Power in Deer Park."***

***— by Pete Coffin —***

***Mortarboard #63, July 2013 — page 761 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 16.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter\\_63\\_downsinglesinglepageweb.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/newsletter_63_downsinglesinglepageweb.pdf)***

***"Regarding Deer Park's Early Issues with Electric Power."***

***— by Kenneth Westby —***

***Mortarboard #77, May 2016 — page 1269 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 27.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard\\_issue\\_97\\_doublepage\\_web.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard_issue_97_doublepage_web.pdf)***

***"Telephone Service Comes to Deer Park — Part 1."***

***— by Kenneth Westby and Peter Coffin —***

***Mortarboard #94, February 2016 — page 1217 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 26.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard\\_issue\\_94\\_doublepage\\_web.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard_issue_94_doublepage_web.pdf)***

***"Telephone Service Comes to Deer Park — Part 2."***

***— by Kenneth Westby and Peter Coffin —***

***Mortarboard #95, March 2016 — page 1233 — Collected Newsletters, Volume 26.***

***[https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard\\_issue\\_95\\_doublepage\\_web.pdf](https://cdphs.org/uploads/3/4/2/0/34204235/mortarboard_issue_95_doublepage_web.pdf)***

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***Facebook — Login to your Facebook account, then type***

***"Clayton & Deer Park Historical Society" into Facebook's search engine.***

***Society's Office:***

***South side of the Deer Park City Hall Complex, 300 Block of East 'A' Street — look for the sign.***

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