

The Black Diamond Historical Society

Railroad Depot Restoration for the Black Diamond Museum

Founders: Carl and Ann Steiert

The Black Diamond Historical Society is forever grateful for the ideas and ambition of Carl and Ann Steiert who provided the spark to restore the old railroad depot to a museum to store the artifacts of the coal mining town of Black Diamond.

Carl Henry Steiert was born February 3, 1911 in Leland, Idaho. He was brought to Black Diamond when he was just 6 months old, the adopted child of Joseph and Rosa Steiert who had settled in Black Diamond in 1888.

Carl was an integral part of the history of Black Diamond. He was a mechanic and went to work for the Diamond Stage Company in 1926 at the age of 15. In the 1960s he bought the company which was then known as Diamond Garage. The garage which still stands today on Highway 169 in the center of town brings found memories for those who lived here during those times. Carl had a tow truck and many kids remember him towing them up the hills in the snow so they could enjoy a long sled ride back down.

Ann Carolyn Steiert was born February 12, 1917. She came with her family to Black Diamond in 1926. She had a natural talent for artistry of all kinds and several examples of her work are on display in the museum. She was also affectionately known as “Grandma” to all at the Black Diamond Grade School where she was a regular volunteer. She was known as a gracious host and welcomed many visitors to both their home and the museum.

Carl and Ann were married in 1935 and had two children, son Jerry and daughter Carol.

Without these two there never would have been a Black Diamond Historical Society and nor would the history have been maintained as it currently is. It is said that what they didn't know about the history of the town might not be worth knowing. Carl was an avid history buff who shared his love of history with school children, civic groups and museum visitors. He fondly recalled for many how everyone in town used to run up to the depot when the train came just to see who was coming to Black Diamond. He also remembered fondly the carloads of coal that lined up for about a mile.

Carl was also one of the first volunteer firefighters in town and served in that role for 25 years. He volunteered frequently for many a project in town.

Carl passed on April 25, 2000 and Ann on June 11, 2006. Because of their dedication their legacy and work will live on forever.

Following is an article originally published in the Globe-News, March 19, 1976 which describes the efforts of the restoration of the railroad building.



Can you believe this is what our present museum building looked like in 1976 when our original “work parties” began? Left to right: Louis Zumek, Chuck Holtz, Carl Steiert, and Archie Eltz. (BDHS calendar series, 1986)

Restoration of the circa 1885 train depot on Railroad Avenue in Black Diamond slowed down during cold weather, said **Ann Steiert**, member of Black Diamond Historical Society.

“Volunteers have been working on shoring up the foundation and as soon as the weather breaks they will finish jacking it up, put in some new timbers, and a concrete footing.

“We have applied for a grant from Washington Historical Society to make the depot into a museum, but the bulk of our working funds have come from the sale of our 13-month historical calendar. We have \$1,500 to go toward furnishing and framing the interior.”

Ms. Steiert said the museum depot was most likely the first structure in Black Diamond when the Welsh miners from Nortonville, Calif., came to mine in Black Diamond.

“They probably pitched their tents around the depot before they built cabins,” she said.

“We plan to make one room a doctor’s office to display the equipment belonging to the son of the first doctor here. Old pictures, miners’ equipment, and even some current items are being collected now.

“We’d like to duplicate the depot’s original waiting room as near as possible. **Amos Ungherini**, an old depot agent who lives in Auburn, is going to help us set up the layout as he remembers it. We’re scrounging around for benches now.

“We’d also like to tape record some of the old-timers’ tales and keep them on file. I’m trying to get as much done by Labor Day as possible for the big Bicentennial celebration. Once the framing is done, it shouldn’t take long.

“We’re not striving for the new look. When I was in New England recently, the most charming museums there were the rough ones. They gave the feeling of going back in time.”

Ms. Steiert said the old Black Diamond jail which used to be down by the railroad tracks may be brought back down if the society can replace it for the present owner who now uses it as a storage shed.

It is a small structure with an anteroom, two cells, one for the men and one for the women. Its two windows still have the original bars on them.

A museum membership drive is just winding up, said Ms. Steiert. As of now, the museum has 85 charter members.

“There are 25 cards left and we will sell them until April 1. The first charter members will be listed on a scroll which will hang in the museum. A one-year membership is \$2, a lifetime membership is \$30, and a family lifetime membership is \$40.”

A few of the 845 historical calendars are left (\$3.50 each) and another edition will be published in the fall, said Ms. Steiert. For more information one may phone her at 886-2826.

The members of the Black Diamond Historical Society will forever be indebted and grateful to Carl and Ann Steiert for their vision, leadership, tenacity and hard work. Without them we would not be.