

WAGON WHEEL

October 2019

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Changes Coming to Main Street Art: Cedar panels to be replaced; benches to stay

By Lisa Allen

It was just over ten years ago, when city leaders were working on Duvall's downtown renovation project, that they decided to add a special element into the Historic District décor by incorporating artwork that would reflect the town's deep connections to the Valley and river. The idea was spearheaded by artist and councilmember Dianne Brudnicki, who with Matthew Waddington organized a committee to develop their vision. "We asked for artists' ideas for wood planks since we wanted them to last longer than cloth banners that some other cities have used," said Brudnicki.

Many local artists responded and the collective results are the dramatic and unique pieces of artwork on 18-foot cedar panels that grace the downtown area. Also added to the beautification project were numerous bright red benches sporting delightful historic Duvall scenes laser-cut into the backs that range from a replication of an old Hix's Market photo to the 1968 Great Piano Drop. Fish and waves stamped into the crosswalks continued the theme.

Most of the cedar panels depict fish, otters, herons, dragonflies and other denizens of the river but at least one set of panels actually brings Native stories to life. On the corners closest to the church are panels carved by North Bend artist and musician Bob Antone, with help from members of the Snoqualmie Tribe and some Hmong families. One plank depicts falling figures and canoes which are meant to represent the enemies of Snoqualmie Chief Patkanim being tricked into going over the Falls. The opposite section shows Native women at the river.



Dan Cautrell stands in front of the "Moon Blessed the Valley" panel he created. The local artist is also known for his "Offerings to the Wind" project, in which he carved flowers and other designs into the ends of trees that had fallen after a huge windstorm years ago. He has made it into a continuing project – his latest work is on the right side (going uphill) of the winding part of Novelty Hill Road. (Photo by Lisa Allen)



Behind Bob Antone is his piece showing Native women at the Snoqualmie River. (Photo by Sean Allen)

On the planks across the street the carvings and artwork represent the Snoqualmie people and their language and songs that are sung by the Snoqualmie Canoe families during cultural gatherings. Replications of some ancient artifacts and petroglyphs found in the area complete the picture.

Antone was so appreciative of the work during the recession that he carved a replica of a Snoqualmie Tribal canoe to present to the city as a way to say 'thanks'. "It was a gift to the city, a gesture of friendship and respect," he explained. "I wanted to go totally Salish and gift them the canoe like the potlatches of old."

The canoe currently hangs on a wall inside Duvall City Hall, but unfortunately out of public view due to lack of a proper space to display it. But the city is holding out hopes that a better spot will eventually

be found for it. Note: More on the fascinating history of Antone's carvings can be found at www.duvallwa.gov/368/Main-Street-Public-Art.

"It was a great gathering of artists; at the end of the day people can look at it and understand what our story was. More art was added later going down the hill (to Depot Park) for the Centennial. My idea was to create an art element," said Brudnicki. "Originally the committee decided on the art and wanted it to be rotating. Since wood doesn't have a forever shelf life, the hope at the time was to budget to replace one piece every year. The old pieces would then be repurposed to perhaps start a wall in the park. The Pomegranate Center (a Seattle non-profit that works with communities on design and development) helped us a great deal. It's a remarkable project - we all worked together with fantastic cooperation. At the end of the day we all came to an agreement and those are the best projects."

Besides Antone, other panel artists included Dan Cautrell, Clifford Nicholas, Bruce Edwards (the "gateway" pieces on the south end of town) and Chiaki Takanahara ("gateway" pieces on the north end). Bench artists were Joe Lee Davidson/Jenn Dean, Kathryn Ackley, John Tapert and Sam Matson, then 17, who designed the bench with the Piano Drop and who also painted the colorful mural at the intersection on the north end of town. Brudnicki recalled that, although Sam was the designer and master artist for the mural, she had provided the paint and volunteered as an "underpainter helper", since the grant for the mural was only \$1,000. Sam used the money for college and has since moved to California.

Cautrell reminisced recently about his part in the project. His creations consist of four different panels. "The river and valley were the inspiration for the art," he said. "There was some leeway, but mostly it was supposed to reflect the environment, culture and history. The city provided us with cedar panels, the artists delivered them and the city installed them. I started each panel with a design and enlarged it to scale, and as I worked on them, the images, with the texture and contrast, began to reveal

themselves.”

But the panels are showing their age and the original bright colors have faded, so plans are finally coming together to replace them all over the next year or two. Wood deterioration has also been a factor - Cautrell said he has had to do some repairs over the years, including on one that had suffered some rot. The mural also has been degrading, so that will be replaced as well, although the city has not yet decided what to put on the wall.

Brudnicki noted that she would like to see more Native-themed art. “We want to tell the history of the Valley.”

Duvall Project Manager Alana McCoy said last week that \$55,000 has been budgeted for the new

latest panel projects, she said, and, among other things, they will be researching paint stability, in hopes of using paint that won’t fade over the years.

A Call for Artists may happen as early as next month. At least some of the panels are expected to be replaced by next summer, McCoy said.

“We will talk with the DCC about materials – we would like the pieces to be colorful and complement the colors of nature,” McCoy said. “We will be working with some consultants but the theme of celebrating the river and valley will stay the same. We hope to use local artists or artists who have lived here at some point

Upcoming Events

The Twilight Novelty Cemetery Tour will take place at the Novelty Cemetery at Saturday, September 28th starting at 6:00 PM.

Not Forgetting the Forgotten War: Korean War: Our Local Veterans Visit the 38th Parallel will perform on Tuesday, November 5th at the Visitors Centers starting at 7:30 PM.