

Palouse fascinated by uncovered advertisement

Anthony Kuipers/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

When the Brick Wall Bar and Grill on Main Street in Palouse burned down this past April, the loss of the building revealed a hidden town secret.

Covering the side of the attached brick building in historic downtown is a large, painted advertisement.

Though it has aged and faded, it's easy to make out a promotion for the old Palouse News printing press and news stand that was once housed there. The sign also promotes a number of products once sold in the building, including stationary, confectionery, bicycles and tobacco from the Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company in West Virginia.

Diane Cooper, who owns the building, said local historians believe the advertisement was initially covered in 1909 when the attached building was constructed.

"We think it was painted before the turn of the century," she said, adding one of those historians told her it is a particularly rare type of advertisement for the area.

It's now fascinating residents 105 years later and inspiring many people to take photos of the historic painting.

Cooper is interested in hiring someone to restore its original quality.

"That's the plan," she said. "That's the hope."

It won't be easy. She first has to find the funding. If the town receives government assistance, it will likely have to match those funds. She also needs to find someone willing to take on the project.

"That, in itself, is going to be a challenge," she said.

Cooper, though, said she believes old buildings like this need to be preserved, and she sees the advertisement as a future "Palouse trademark."

"I really think that this is going to be a prominent signature for Palouse," she said.

She may eventually build a retail store where the bar and grill once stood, but she promises to leave the advertisement visible if she does.

Until then, she wouldn't mind donations to help restore the advertisement.

"I'd be willing to take it," she said.

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