

Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments
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Dan Van Zant
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Dear Dan,

Thanks for your note. I'm glad you were able to find a caretaker for Thunder Mountain and that it will soon be open for the public. This must make you feel good.

I have a number of horror stories about people taking over a site after the death of the artist and I would like to share the following.

There is a chance that the monument can get some sort of historic status and I would like to suggest most strongly that you inform Mr. Flanseas (?) that he shall not "improve" upon Thunders' original work.

This means any needed repair follows Thunders methods and repainting means using the exact same colors and methods of application. He has to check with you or..... before any major changes. NO ADDITIONS and in the case of things unfixable - nothing is to be removed to "make the place neater."

I realize the need for the caretaker to make a living but beware of excessive tourist items. Fake Indian memorabilia would of made Thunder crazy as would the other junk that tends to appear in roadside attractions.

Discuss with the person greeting the public what you feel is an honest story of your dads history, the reasons for building the monument and the construction techniques - let this be the official story. Remove all original papers - xerox them and keep in a safe place. Have a scrapbook on the site of xeroxed images. Keep a journal handy on the site, to jot down remembrances, names and addresses of people who knew your dad or visited or lived on the site. Besides personal interest, some of the material might be useful in gaining historic acceptance and learning building techniques.

Make sure you get the names of people who are obviously taking pictures and gathering information for commercial purposes - eg. magazine stories. You should suggest to these people that permission to shoot pictures means responsibility on their part to send copies of their articles for the Thunder Mountain Archives. Make sure they include your hours of operation so you can benefit from the story.

Invite the folks in town for an open house. When I was there last, everybody I talked to in Winnemucca had something nasty to say, some the same exact story, but nobody had ever been on the property. I'm sure you already knew some of the things I mentioned, however I am a worrier.

Good luck!

Seymour Rosen
Director