

LATAH COUNTY PIONEER
HISTORICAL MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

McConnell Mansion 110 South Adams Moscow, Idaho

Quarterly Bulletin Vol. 1, No. 1 October 1972

As you see above, this is the first issue of this publication. The Board of Directors of the Association is launching the Bulletin primarily as a means of keeping members informed on Association affairs. This, it seems, is a minimum return that individual membership dues ought to deserve.

There is need for the Bulletin also to provide a more tangible bond of common interest among us than exists in merely holding membership in the Association. Only a fraction of our 138 registered members attend the two general meetings of the year, and 35 who were members in 1971 did not renew in 1972. The Bulletin will give a sense of belonging to a select group with more than ordinary interest in the Latah County pioneer era.

A third purpose is to provide broader and more accessible documentation of Association affairs than is afforded in the "bare bones" minutes of official meetings. Here the essence of Board actions can be conveniently made known to all members, coming events can be scheduled, problems aired, and forward plans and aspirations presented.

Still another purpose we foresee for the Bulletin is to publish or review contemporary historical materials as they are prepared from time to time by students, researchers, and recollectors of Latah

County pioneer history. Already several such items are available. Those that have come to our attention include:

Whispers from Old Genesee and Echoes from the Salmon River, John A. Platt, 1959

Early and Present History of Fix Ridge, Latah County, Idaho, The Fix Ridge Club, 1964

Some Recollections of Homer David--1890-1910, 1966

"The Thorn Creek Valley Incidents" (Term paper, N. W. History course, University of Idaho), 1970

They Came to a Ridge, Ann Nilsson Driscoll, 1970

Today Is Curs, Elsie Nelson, Moscow, 1972

The Uncovered Wagon of 1871, Alma Lauder Keeling (in preparation)

A history of the Deary community, by a native son, is in the making. At modest cost the Association might sponsor systematic documentation of the histories of other communities of the County by University of Idaho history students.

So much for the purposes of our Quarterly Bulletin. The Board will appreciate reactions from members.

WHAT'S GOING ON

For those who have not been able to attend Association meetings or to visit the McConnell Mansion this year, several important new developments are noted. Also it seems well to set these things in writing for future reference of all concerned with Association affairs.

With the end of summer, Association activities are being picked up again. The second of our two regular meetings of the year was held at the Mansion on September 27, with a potluck supper shared by 20 appreciators of this pioneer gourmet tradition. The Board approved undertaking the Bulletin in general consensus that it would well serve the purposes noted above.

Our Pioneer Hall of Fame project, launched late last year, has had slow going according to Clifford Ott, its leader. Only one family photo panel has been completed to hang in the Hall. Apparently, interested families are having difficulty in finding and identifying photos of their pioneer members to fill these panels. Many individual photos have been sent in, but often covering only one generation. All photos for a given family should be submitted together, with each photo showing name, dates of birth and death, year and place settled (or born) in Latah County.

Work on the photos was discontinued through the summer while Mr. Ott was busy full time with his job at Potlatch. During the coming late fall and winter months he will have time again for the project, and all interested persons are urged to renew their efforts to get photos to him. For Hall of Fame use, all photos are recopied to a standard 5" x 7" size, then returned if wanted by the sender. Mr. Ott is an expert at making clear new pictures from faded old ones, so don't conclude your picture is not good enough until you have given him a chance.

A charge of \$2.00 per picture is made to partially cover his expenses. His time for this project is entirely donated.

The Personal Data Record forms devised to provide written records for more detail on our pioneers than can be shown on the photo panels have been distributed to contact persons in several communities, reports

Kenneth Platt, leader of this project. Contact persons now providing forms and assistance at local points are Mrs. John Hickman and Mr. Rudolph Nordby, Genesee; Mrs. Anna Marie Oslund, Troy; Mrs. Floyd Lawrence, Deary; Mrs. Naomi Parker, Bovill; Mrs. Milton Becker, Harvard; Mrs. Evon Guernsey, Princeton; and Mr. and Mrs. Lee Gale, Potlatch. Only a few completed forms have been received so far, but several hundred have been issued, and a good share are expected to come in over the next six months.

Establishment of an administrative office, staffed by Mr. Lawrence (Larry) French, Curator, and by a secretary, was accomplished for three months last spring. Now a farmer at Potlatch, Larry was unable to serve through the summer, but will be back on the job in the McConnell Mansion from January through March. With his return, the secretary position will be reactivated. Their combined energies will be focused on identifying, labeling, cataloging, and arranging more orderly storage of an atticful of items brought to the Mansion from the Courthouse, or donated by interested individuals.

Their work will be greatly assisted by the presence in the Mansion of Mr. Lou Cormier, who took up residence there recently as full-time custodian. Mr. Cormier already has done much to tidy up the Mansion and the grounds, and his handling of much of the routine visitor traffic will enable Mr. French to put most of his time on improving Museum records, displays, and storage facilities.

A change of policy, to stop the use of the living room furniture for meetings in the Mansion by social groups and visiting groups, was adopted by the Board at its August meeting. Increasing use of the Mansion has brought rising concern for the safety and preservation of the "museum piece" furniture and fittings which constitute much of its historic attraction and

value. Not only are most items vulnerable to wear and soiling if used by visitors, but some are frail enough to be broken easily as was a rocking chair when tipped over by a small girl a few months ago.

To avoid this, it was decided to ribbon off the items which should not be used or handled, and to put suitable identifying and explanatory cards on them. Meetings will be limited to groups of 20 or fewer, which can be accommodated on folding chairs until such time as additional space may become available, through new construction or otherwise.

The Association's booth at the County Fair, September 14-16, took second prize and attracted many visitors. Of the 240 who signed the booth register, many took copies of the Personal Data Form for pioneer family histories, and some ordered copies of the various commercially printed genealogical forms displayed. Contests to guess and name the most towns that ever have existed in Latah County drew 35 entries. The biggest attraction, however, was the photo display prepared by Clifford and Peggy Ott. Both young and old showed special interest in the period pictures of Genesee and Moscow dating from 1878 on. So many visitors came during the busier periods of the Fair that one attendant could not properly serve them, and it was concluded that attendants should serve in pairs hereafter.

Prepared by Harry Sampson and Kenneth Platt, the booth was attended in morning, afternoon, and evening shifts by Mrs. Hagedorn, Mrs. Stillinger, Mrs. Wicks, Leonard Ashbaugh, Lou Cormier, and Clair Woodward, as well as by Sampson and Platt. Contest results were used as the basis of a news release published in the Idahonian on September 21, which brought favorable comment on Association activities.

PROBLEMS

Installation of the fire escape stairway which has been lying on the Mansion lawn for more than a year continues to await the day when the combined services of a welder and a crane, already generously offered without cost, can be marshalled simultaneously. Signs that this may happen this fall begin to be hopeful.

Lack of space to accommodate more acquisitions for the Museum becomes a more pressing problem with each new donation. Already the attic of the Mansion is crowded. Additional storage space could be developed in the basement, but this will require from several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on how much and how good space is to be provided. Such space would be suitable only for storage and not for display. Although it is standard practice to circulate selected museum items out of storage and into display space periodically through the year, our display space also is so limited as to be a problem.

The question of how, where, and when the Association might acquire additional space has been discussed almost from our founding date, and a modest fund dedicated to future space needs has been accumulated. To meet these needs on land adjacent to the McConnell grounds, as some have visualized, would require a major community investment, toward which our present fund would scarcely be a token. At the same time it is generally conceded that any new structure that might be placed on the McConnell grounds would be both inadequate for our long-term needs and undesirable for its crowding of the Mansion.

A possible alternative now under study might be to get space in the present Post Office building when it is vacated after construction of the new Federal Building. This could suffice for the next several years, permitting concentrated attention on accepting, collecting,

cataloging, and storing, before it is too late, the wide range of pioneer items which cannot even be considered now for lack of space.

This space problem, of course, properly concerns the entire County community, as beneficiaries of the Museum. Community concern therefore is solicited. Persons able to do so might well consider this a worthy object for bequests. More immediate donations, needless to say, would be especially welcome both in themselves and for their stimulative effect.

Lack of proper identification of items donated to the Museum continues to be a problem. No matter how genuine or attractive the object, if it is undated and is not identified with a particular place or family name, it has very little historic worth and correspondingly low interest value as a museum item. Items whose former use no longer is familiar must have their use noted if they are to interest viewers. Unfortunately, the Museum already has received a large number of items with little or no identification, either of date or of source. As authenticated items are received, inevitably they will be given preference over these unauthenticated items.

Donors of such items now on hand should visit the Museum and identify their gifts, if this still is possible. No further donations should be accepted without information covering at least the name of the donor and the object, its use if that is not self-evident, date span of its use in Latah County, place of use, and name of user. Additional information relevant to the object, such as place of origin, material made of, maker, etc., increases its museum interest and value. Forms are available at the Museum office for supplying this information, and should be filled out on any objects brought in for donation or loan. Association members who travel the County where pioneer era items might be offered for the Museum should carry some of the forms for completion on the spot.

LOOKING AHEAD

A new membership dues option adopted in May is expected to simplify both the paying and the recording as new members join and as present members renew their Association affiliations for 1973 and future years. This is the option to take a 5-year membership at \$10.00 in lieu of continuing annual renewals at \$2.50 a year. Both the annual and the life (\$50.00) memberships continue to be available. The Association welcomes all terms, but especially invites consideration of the advantages of the new 5-year option over annual renewals.

That life memberships have their own special attraction is shown by the fact that 82 of the 138 present total memberships are in that category. The names of many founding families are on this list; the Association will be proud to add the names of any others who wish to join it.

Long range planning for future Museum facilities was provided for with the appointment on September 27 of a 6-member committee to work on this front. Designated by the Association's interim president, Grace Wicks, were Larry French, Harry Sampson, Mrs. Wilbur Shelton, Leonard Ashbaugh, Mrs. C. R. Stillinger, and G. Orien Baker. The committee will work with other planning groups concerned with community facilities, with an eye out for possible combined uses.

School groups soon will resume their annual parade of visits to McConnell Mansion. There they will receive personally guided tours by none other than Mrs. Earl Clyde, Idaho's 1972 Mother of the Year. A founding member of the Association, Lola herself is of pioneer stock and has a wealth of McConnell family stories and local pioneer lore with which she enriches these excursions. No requests for tours have come in since fall term started, she reports, but October has been

a strong tour month in other years and is expected to repeat. Last school year more than 1000 children toured the Mansion under her guidance.

Besides seeing and hearing their pioneer background, the children each receive a handful of cookies as they depart. Made by Lola from a recipe of Mrs. McConnell's that combines flour, eggs, lard, sugar, blackstrap, and pinches of this and that, these are delectables that linger in childhood memories. Lola has her reward in the flow of letters by which each young visitor expresses his thanks and tells what most interested him. Some future Bulletin may devote a page to excerpts from these classics of free spelling and guileless expression.

Teachers planning visits to the Mansion by their classes are asked to provide two adult leaders per class. Not more than two classes, totaling 50 to 60 in combined numbers, should be scheduled for any one visit. Please write or call Mrs. Clyde far enough ahead to allow orderly scheduling, and to allow time for making those cookies!

Mrs. Wm. E. Borah's 102nd birthday falls on October 17, and the Association has sent her felicitations suited to the occasion. Born Mary McConnell, Mrs. Borah grew to young womanhood in the Mansion. It was there that the young "Bill" Borah, in Moscow on a law case, saw her with her sisters descending the Mansion steps for a Sunday buggy ride and was smitten. One chair now in the Mansion was there then. Mrs. Borah is, of course, enrolled as an honorary life member of the Association. Her national reputation as a Washington hostess in the years of Senator Borah's ascendancy does honor to the traditions of the Mansion as home of her father when Governor of Idaho.

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS

The Treasurer's Report of September 27 showed \$1,567.75 in the building fund and \$1,559.63 in savings and checking accounts. A full statement of receipts and expenditures is not appropriate here, but may be seen in the records of the treasurer.

The present officers, Directors, and Committee Chairmen of the Association are shown below. The Board of Directors is comprised of the chairmen of the various committees, plus designated representatives of the Latah County Pioneer Society. Chairmen are appointed by the president and are free to enlist other members in their respective committees as needed. All such service is honorary.

President	Mrs. Guy P. Wicks Moscow
1st Vice-President	Mrs. C. R. Stillinger Moscow
2nd Vice-President	Mrs. Ed. Morken, Sr. Genesee
Secretary	Mrs. Leonard Ashbaugh Moscow
Treasurer	Mr. Wm. T. Jacobson Moscow

Leadership wanted: During the two years that Harry Sampson was president of our Association, Grace Wicks was vice-president, and the work was heavy with our preservation of the Mansion. Following that time, Mrs. Wicks was president for two years. Her term ended the last of April of this year, and no one could be found who would take the presidency. She left for three months, and Leora Stillinger, 1st vice-president, carried on until mid-July. On August 24th the full membership was asked to meet at the Mansion, and Mrs. Wicks was prevailed upon to take leadership until someone else could be found, perhaps after the first

of the year. It is well to remember in our work that, in large part, everything is voluntary--anyone who wishes to offer his help on committees or his leadership of any kind is most welcome to do so. In fact, from such abundant talent as our membership affords has nearly every achievement been accomplished. Will you help us? Contact Grace or any of the Board of Directors.

In addition to the honorary services of Board members and elected officers shown above, the Association has benefit of the paid services of Mr. French as part-time Curator, of a part-time secretary, and of Mr. Cormier as full-time Custodian. Mr. Cormier's compensation is in the form of free living quarters in the Mansion.

Standing Committees:

Hospitality, Mrs. Wm. T. Marineau
Membership, Mrs. H. Robert Otness
Publicity, Mr. Kenneth B. Platt
Public Relations, Mrs. Earl Clyde
Long-Range Planning, Mr. Larry French
Expansion, Mr. Harry Sampson
Hall of Pioneers, Mr. Clifford Ott
History, Mr. Kenneth B. Platt
Maintenance, Mr. Earl Humphrey
Construction, Mr. Leonard Ashbaugh
Guide to School Children, Mrs. Earl Clyde
Policy, Dr. G. Orien Baker
Decoration, Mrs. A. B. McDonald
Memorials, vacant
Summer Guides, Mr. D. D. DuSault
Finance, Mr. Wm. T. Jacobson
Scrapbook, Mrs. Henrik Juve
Bulletin, Mr. Kenneth B. Platt and
Mrs. H. Robert Otness
Historical Club Representatives, Mrs. Wm.
Haxton, Sr., and Mrs. W. F. Schnell
Pioneer Association Representatives,
Dr. G. O. Baker and Mrs. Gerald Ingle

LATAH COUNTY PIONEER
HISTORICAL MUSEUM ASS'N.

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Moscow, Idaho 83843

First
Class
Mail

NOTICE OF MEETING

There will be a meeting of the Association,
a potluck dinner at 7:00 p.m., at the Mansion
on Friday, October 20th. All members and
friends are cordially invited. No reser-
vations are necessary.