

LATAH COUNTY MUSEUM SOCIETY

McCormell Mansion 110 South Adams Moscow, Idaho

Quarterly Bulletin
Kenneth B. Platt, Editor

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President's Message

The Museum continues to operate, although like the iceberg, many of its activities are not apparent to the average observer. Many individuals work with it in various undertakings, many of which do not become immediately apparent. Some put in many hours and others help out occasionally. We are county funded. This is adequate to pay operating costs and utilities for the Mansion, plus a limited amount for paid positions on a part-time basis at minimal rates. Nearly all labor has been on a donated basis.

The University of Idaho has provided students on special projects where they gain experience as class laboratory technicians and at the same time help us. Memberships and miscellaneous donations add a small amount to our income. We have had some funding from government programs for labor on the grounds and in connection with the Oral History Project. All this combines to keep us operative within close limitations. With rising costs, our funded income must be budgeted and spent carefully, even frugally, to keep us solvent.

While specific projects and activities have been mentioned before, and will be again, it is impossible to review them all in this brief space. What follows are some notes on those which happen to be nearest center-stage at the moment.

Membership Recruitment - The need for increasing our membership county-wide long has been apparent. A committee last year recommended changes in the membership structure. Last winter a University student studied

our membership and submitted findings and recommendations. After review by the Committee, a firm proposal for a new structure was submitted and approved. Carol Renfrew is in charge of further efforts to enlarge the membership. New brochures, applications, and mailing material are being assembled for a fall membership drive. A community page in the Idahonian will be used in this connection.

Our Museum Calendar also will be featured in the Idahonian. This calendar has been in preparation for a year, again with University student assistance. The calendar will cover 15 months, beginning with October 1975. Each month is illustrated with a separate historical picture from the Museum collection, and calendar dates will refer to historic happenings in Latah County. Also featured will be local events for the coming Bicentennial year. The first 500 of the 1000 printed have just been delivered. The committee on sales and distribution will be meeting early in July. The calendars are to be sold county-wide, at \$3.00 each. In addition to being unusually useful and attractive, they will do much to increase interest in the Museum. Use them as gifts to friends.

Latah County Fair Exhibit - September 11-13 we will again have a stall at the Fairgrounds, with interesting materials on display. Past fair exhibits have attracted more than average attention, and this one will be in the same hands - Harry Sampson's - that have prepared the space before.

Lou Cormier Leaving - Lou has told us he will be leaving the Museum this fall to undertake a project he has long wanted to do. As we wish him Godspeed and all success in his new venture, we view our own loss in the measure of his long-standing contributions. His title of Curator for the past three years has been inadequate, to say the least. Not only did he fill that position most ably, but he has also served as host, guide, ad-man, coordinator of Museum visitations, clerk, maintenance man, grounds keeper, landscape architect and planner, expediter and arranger, and a host of other jobs that come with keeping the Museum open to the public and to school groups.

As one always interested in the Museum and the Society's objectives for it, Lou has been exemplary in his work--loyal, dependable, and always on hand to welcome visitors, ready to plan special events, and faithful to handle problems when no one else was available. He made his quarters in the Mansion a home to be lived in, even as he made the Mansion grounds a pleasant setting. His contributions in these early years of Museum operation will not be forgotten, and we are pleased that his continued interest and suggestions will be available.

Our immediate problem of his replacement will not be easy.

Genesee Centennial - A County-Wide Challenge

An attendance of nearly 2,000 was reported for Genesee's 1975 Community Day on June 14. From pancake breakfast through parade, 25- and 50-year class reunions, barbecue lunch, and evening dancing, young and old joined in the jubilee festivities. It was a day of homecoming and of "belonging." "Remember when" undoubtedly were the most spoken words and unspoken thoughts of the day.

Although no speeches or banners marked the occasion, this was the 100th year from Genesee's founding. A granddaughter of one original settler from whose farm part of the 1875 townsite was platted, and a grandson of another, rode in the GHS 50-year reunion group. Everyone in the group was of pioneer descent. Great grandsons and granddaughters of other 1870s pioneers were in the 25-year reunion group. In the exhibit hall hung a patchwork quilt the blocks for which were sewn more than 100 years ago by the mother of Mrs. Emma Shirrod, who finished the quilt this year.

Within the 1875-1975 century span the fortunes of Genesee as a town have waxed and waned. In 1868 the then 3-store town pulled its skirts out of the mud of Old Town and moved a mile west to its present site, where it promptly boomed. A quote from John Platt's Whispers from Old Genesee and Echoes of the Salmon River gives this picture:

"Genesee, in the late '80s and early '90s was a lively burg with six saloons, five hotels, five livery stables, and several merchandise stores. The town was the railroad terminal and many cattle from the Camas Prairie and Salmon River areas were driven out and loaded on the cars at Genesee or Uniontown. Two trainloads of cattle were loaded in one day on several occasions. Hogs in large bands also were shipped from these towns. Every train brought new settlers for the surrounding country, and here friends met them, or they went by stage to their destination. All the freight for the back country was hauled from the end of the railroad--Genesee."

Today's Genesee business district is a pale shadow of the bustling railway terminus that served the "back country" beyond the Clearwater from 1888 to 1898, until the railway reached Lewiston. But this does not mean the community as a whole has declined economically. On the site of the 4-room frame schoolhouse that served 146 pupils in 1889 now stands a fine modern educational plant insured at over \$2,000,000 and serving about 400 pupils. Out in the country, today's tractor farming has brought almost a 10 to 1 increase in size of farm operating units, with a corresponding decrease in people on farms. Most of the buildings and fences that marked the 80- and 160-acre holdings typical of earlier times have long since disappeared, and many of the old "section line" dirt roads that gave access to every such farm have been plowed under.

On the other hand, the Genesee Farmers Union has increased its elevator and warehouse storage capacity to perhaps five times what it was in the horse farming days. If Genesee no longer ships trainloads of cattle, it is fully capable of shipping trainloads of wheat and peas. Farm fertilizer and pesticide businesses that were non-existent then, and their attendant airborne delivery services, well may represent greater investment than all the horses that once tilled the rich Genesee farm country.

The railway depot that served Genesee from 1888 until its use was discontinued some years ago recently was offered the town as a gift from the Burlington Northern

Railway Company. Regrettably, the town found costs of moving the depot off Railway land and renovating it for community uses too great to undertake, even though one reuniting high school class had pledged several hundred dollars for this purpose. Thus it seems the oldest building in present Genesee, and the one to which more of the town's history ties than to any other, is doomed to destruction for lack of any strong community sentiment for preserving it.

While recognizing that each generation must live in the present and be guided mainly by current practical values, one cannot but lament this seeming inappreciation for symbols of past significance. Each generation also needs to know and cherish its historic foundations, lest we become mere day-to-day money grubbers.

It is not as if the Genesee community, shrunken in numbers though it is, could not afford to restore and use its historic depot building as a community remembrance center. Two farm sales reported on Community Day—one for \$1,200 an acre and the other for \$1,500 an acre—illustrate a 15-fold increase in land values in the last 50 years. With the great increase in size of farms already noted, it is plain this wealth is concentrated in far fewer hands than in the past.

The real question, it seems, is whether the Genesee community can afford not to preserve one or more of its historic buildings. All of us are in debt to the past—economically, culturally, spiritually. For a community to be aware and proud of its own heritage is not a nostalgic indulgence, but a due regard for values received. To be unaware is to lose contact with essential landmarks. If you do not know where you started, what is the significance of where you are now?

This is centennial time not only for Genesee, but for Latah County as a whole. With our national Bicentennial coming up next year, it is especially timely for us to examine and value our heritage and to dedicate some part of our present fortune to the preservation of selected items having high community significance. In Genesee the depot seems a logical choice. Also at

Genesee, but significant to the whole county, is the Nordby barn, reputedly built in 1875 and thought to be the oldest large structure in the county. This barn has been proposed as a county exhibit facility for horse-farming equipment and related historic items.

Such projects need sponsors. The several thousand dollars required to move, renovate, and make usable the Genesee depot was considered more than could be justified in the modest city budget. An offered gift of Troy's railway depot to the municipality there was turned down for similar reasons. The McConnell Mansion at Moscow, crowded to capacity with pioneer treasures, faces large costs for basement excavation and safe-storage construction before the many historically significant--and too often perishable--items now in homes around the county can be properly accommodated there. County tax monies cannot meet these costs.

The Troy depot since has been bought for use as a private antique shop, at substantially higher cost than the city faced. We are glad the depot itself thus is being saved and put to suitable use but believe the Troy community missed a golden opportunity to tie its past, present, and future together with this natural focal point of local interest. Again the question arises: Can a community afford not to cherish such historic assets?

For those who have the means to help preserve our pioneer landmarks and provide facilities for saving and exhibiting the artifacts of that period, what better time than now? This centennial season brings a special challenge to benefit ourselves and the future by honoring our ancestral heritage.

All money donations to the Latah County Museum Society to help acquire or preserve historic buildings or objects are tax-deductible. So are donations directly to the county or to a municipality for public projects such as these. Bequests by will offer another opportunity to benefit such projects, while reducing inheritance taxes. The Society will provide legal counseling, if desired, for anyone wishing to act along these lines.

Oral History Dividends Beginning

The two years since the Oral History Project got under way sometimes has seemed a long wait for tangible returns, but now they are coming in and further prospects look good. To test the usefulness of the tapes as teaching aids at elementary school level, two records were adaptively worded into booklet form and printed by the Northern Idaho Multidistrict, headquartered at Troy. The booklets, along with the parent tapes, then were used as study materials in 6th grade classes at Kendrick, Juliaetta, and two or more schools of the White Pine District at the end of the school year.

Results were most encouraging. The booklets themselves are well written, attractively sketch-illustrated, and colorfully though simply bound. Teachers who used them were enthusiastic. More important, pupils found them fascinating.

Multidistrict staff are circulating the sample booklets and companion tapes to school districts throughout northern Idaho, and will produce them for sale at cost to other schools wanting them. With more than 100 tapes to draw from, an extensive library of these fine new teaching resources now is possible.

Following are sample letters from among the many written by Kendrick and Juliaetta 6th graders after listening to the story told by Mr. Edward Swenson about homesteading in the valley of Park.

"Dear Mr. Edward Swenson:

Thank you very much for telling us about all of the things that happened when you were just a young child. And thank you for putting them into books and on the tapes. We really learned a lot from the books and tapes on what happened many years ago.

Thank you,

Ronda Conway"

"Our class listened to the tape and read the book that tells about your young life experiences. Mr. Manfull read the booklet to us, as we followed along. We really liked it. We used it as a Social Studies class, and I tell you it sure was more interesting listening to what happened in your life time, then what happens to the Latin Americans way back when. Thanks for sharing it with us!

Sincerely, Cheryl Hutton"

"I'd like to express my complete appreciation for your story and tape of your early life. I am most interested in you and am eager to find out more of your life and experiences. I am in the sixth grade and have a very good teacher, so I hope he can get more books and tapes and let us learn more.

Yours truly, Grady Shauver"

"I really enjoyed the book that told about all your experiences. That book I think teaches us a lot more than the social studies book that we have. This teaches us about our own state and I think thats what we should learn about. Thanks for telling us about some of the state of Idaho.

Sincerely, Guna Whiting"

"I loved your tape. It sounds like yall had a tough time back then. Personally I wished time could go back to then. The part that was best was the time the Indians came. Thats the kind of Social Studies we should have. We should learn about our own area first then some place like South America, Cuba and everywhere like that. The book was not printed by some eastern dued, it was put into your own words. Well so long.

Yours truly, Scott Sheets"

"I really do like the books and tapes. I never really paid any atencion to my teacher while reading but your books I love listening to. I never had so much fun at school like I did today and I never heard something as funny as the part about the Indians. I liked that. If I had the money I would buy your books. But I have

no money at all so I can't. I wish I could.

Sincerely yours, Shari Brown
P.S. I really find you interesting."

"The books of where you told your life story and about Park were great. I really enjoyed them a lot. They were the most interesting books I have ever read. And the tape was good too. I learnt a lot from the tape and the book. You really told the story good. Thank you for bringing the books and the tape.

Your Friend, Kathy Hadley"

"Hi. You know those books you wrote about when you came to this place. they were the greatest books ever wrote. I thought they are good history for all 5th, 6th, and 7th graders. I think even grownups like your books. Those are real nice book Mr. Swenson.

Sincerely, Lance Wadford"

In view of the very favorable responses, we are particularly pleased that the Oral History Project got yet another extension at the end of June. Coverage of the director's salary is to be continued on a month-to-month basis by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. No funds for this extension were provided in the Society's budget, but donations from three members of the Oral History Project Committee were pledged to cover costs of mileage, tapes, and office operations for another three months. At a June 27 meeting of the Committee, Project Director Sam Schrage presented a priority list of 73 prospective informants yet to be interviewed and estimated that in the next three months he might cover as much as 60% of these.

The importance of keeping this project going as long as funds for it can be found is underlined by the tally of "Pioneers Deceased Since June 1, 1974." Prepared by Mrs. Gerald Ingle for the Latah County Pioneer Association meeting of June 15, the record lists 214 names--an average of 18 a month. These are people whose pioneer recollections are the objective of the Oral History Project. Fortunately some had been tape-interviewed, but most had not.

Publications Fund Nearing Reality

The Society's 250 copies of Whispers from Old Genesee and Echoes of the Salmon River were received in May, after six months of printing delays. Still further delay was avoided only by accepting them with misprinted contents pages, which are being corrected by hand.

Buyers from this stock will have distinctive copies--besides the hand-corrected contents pages they are serially numbered from 1 to 250. The Society's price of \$6.95 at the Mansion (\$7.25 if mailed) makes them a further bargain, as the expected bookstall price will be around \$9.00. The volume (184 pp.) is attractively hard-bound, with many photo illustrations, and has been well received by buyers so far. To this writing about 100 copies have been sold by the Society.

Members are reminded that all net proceeds from both this book and Pioneer Glimpses of Latah County (\$1.25) go into the Publications Fund to help finance publication of other local history manuscripts. Our goal is to get at least \$1,000 into this fund. These two books could net as much as \$900.00 if all copies are sold. Gross total sales to date have been \$868.55, which is approaching costs of publication. If sales continue good, we should soon be on the plus side.

Treasurer's Report, 6/26/75

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| <u>Receipts, 1/1/75 through 6/26/75, General Operating Fund</u> | |
| First 6 mo. apportionment, Latah County | \$4,500.00 |
| Memberships | 222.50 |
| Memorials | 617.50 |
| Sales of publications | 868.55 |
| Total operating receipts | <u>\$6,208.55</u> |
| <u>Expenditures, 1/1/75 through 6/26/75</u> | \$5,394.50 |
| <u>Balance on hand, June 26, 1975</u> | \$ 814.05 |
| Bank of Idaho Special Building Fund Account | \$ 385.93 |
| Savings Certificate | \$1,000.00 |
| Savings Certificate | \$1,372.50 |

The above operating balance was made possible only by deferring payment of \$500.00 in salary owed the Director until the second six month apportionment from the county is received. With the Director and secretary employed only for the first three months of the year and with most of the cost of new exhibits for the year also falling in that period, budget demands are heavily weighted into the first half of the year. As the above figures show, substantial additional income from outside the county allotment is needed to overcome this disability.

New exhibits now on display include many loan items that must be returned to owners at the end of the year, so don't delay too long on your next visit to the Museum. A spinning wheel loaned by Mrs. W. Robinson and a rug loom loaned by Oscar S. Nelson are among the most unusual. In the loom gallery also are eight home-made quilts and a treasure chest of fancy needlework--embroidery, crocheting, tatting, and laces. The quilts include a three-generation display: Grandma Taylor, Minnie Taylor Lauder, and Alma Lauder Keeling. Two quilts and a crocheted oval rug are on loan from Miriam Shelton.

In the local history gallery are kerosene lamps and lanterns and a "footburner" plow with doubletrees and butt chains, loaned by the Earl Clydes, Bill Peterson, and others. The fur trappers gallery has been carried over from last year by popular demand of school children.

Two large display cases in the lobby of the Latah County Courthouse contain early photos and mining tools. These displays extend public awareness of the Museum, and we hope they will stimulate further visits to the Museum itself.

Museum visitors during the first six months of 1975 totaled 1,025. January was the high month, with 274. Adults made up 585 of the total; children, 440.

Pioneering: Any Takers?

Pioneering as seen from a two- to three-generation distance tends to take on a romantic glow and to induce wishful thoughts about getting back to the simple life of "the good old days." Youth with its readiness for adventure is a great shock absorber, and many of the rest of us cling to the illusion that we, too, would enjoy roughing it even now, if only we had the opportunity.

Fortunately or otherwise, few of us in the TV age are put to the test any more. The following accounts from the Glacier Park area of Montana and adjoining Canada give a glimpse of pioneering conditions both near and recent enough to break through most of that romantic haze. Two sisters, Eva and Jessie DeFord, tell the stories. Eva's story was told in a May 1975 issue of the Hungry Horse News.

* * *

Eva DeFord Beebe, now 82, came from Peoria in 1911 to visit her sister, Mrs. Schoenberger, then living with her husband on a homestead near Polebridge, far up the North Fork of the Flathead River. On a second visit she met and married Chauncy Beebe. On their wedding day, August 1, 1914, the young couple, together with sister Jessie and friend Fred Stepler, rode horseback 45 miles from Polebridge to Columbia Falls, Montana, arriving after dark, got married and started back to Polebridge, camping out over night. Next day they rode on back to Polebridge for their wedding supper and dance.

A charge of dynamite set off by waiting friends alerted the community that the wedding troupe had arrived. Lanterns lit the outdoor tables, where 150 people joined in the feast. Dancing continued all night, to be followed by a big breakfast before the party broke up. "Music for the wedding feast," reports the News, "was provided by a small organ. Mrs. Horace Brewster was the only person who knew how to play, and the tune she knew was 'The Missouri Waltz,' which the folks danced to all night above the store."

This start set the tone, more or less, for a long career in remote park ranger and Wildlife Service posts. At the St. Mary Ranger Station in 1918-19 Chauncy Beebe was a one-man work force. He cleared trails, patrolled, repaired the station, met tour buses, and manned the first automobile checking station at St. Mary-- five cars the first year. Bears were thick around the station, Mrs. Beebe recalls. She had to closely guard her laundry hanging out to dry, to keep the bears from tearing it to shreds. Under the house a family of skunks occupied the root cellar!

As a predator control officer after transferring to the Wildlife Service, Mr. Beebe killed some 300 grizzlies, which then still ranged out on the plains and killed cattle. He also trapped or shot 400 mountain lions.

Mrs. Beebe, now widowed, lives at Columbia Falls.

* * *

Jessie DeFord Roberts' story is taken from a June 1975 resume of her husband's 44-year career as a Canadian customs officer at various posts along the Montana-Idaho-Washington borders.

Raised in a large English city, William Roberts came to the area in 1911 with no previous experience in primitive living. After several short stints elsewhere, he was stationed at the Flathead, B.C., customs port, 42 miles north of present West Glacier, Montana, in June 1914. A two-day wagon trip from West Glacier with an upriver homesteader delivered him there. As Mrs. Roberts writes:

"Imagine his dismay when the wagon pulled up to an old, dilapidated log cabin almost ready to tumble down. No doors or glass windows graced this mansion, just gunny sacks. . . . Inside, there was a small, rusty tin stove, a bunk bed made of poles with dead grass for a mattress. . . . There was one old, rickety chair and a home-made table of sorts. A few cooking pans, some enamel dishes, a tea kettle and a few knives and forks provided the culinary equipment."

The homesteader having hurried on, utter loneliness crowded in, driving Roberts to the necessary chores of getting water, firewood, and fresh boughs for his bed. Then he sat down to a supper of crackers, cheese, and canned fruit, having brought nothing more! Luckily, oil drillers and mining engineers checking in and out of his border station over ensuing weeks soon brought in more adequate provisions and bedding and introduced him to the excellent trout fishing in the Flathead. In October a comfortable new station house was built and adequately furnished. Nonetheless, he soon understood why his two predecessors at the post had lasted, respectively, one week and one month—and why his supervisor had made him sign up for at least three years.

Quoting Mrs. Roberts again: "His biggest problem at Flathead was deep snow in winter (which closed the camps) and high water in spring (which made travel next to impossible). In winter he would showshoe the 42 miles to town to mail his monthly reports. In the fall he would order enough supplies to last until the end of high water, about the first of July."

Jessie DeFord soon became a partner in this rugged life. As she relates:

"It was a lonely life, and the new settlers from Illinois were not to be ignored. On March 11, 1915, he married Jessie DeFord, after a courtship that included wading an icy river in dead of winter and a mad dash for a half-mile to the DeFord ranch before he froze solid."

They left Flathead Port reluctantly in 1923, when schooling for son William Stanley became necessary. The transfer was to Twin Lakes, Alberta. Now only seventeen miles from town on a road merely impassable in rain or snow, they felt they had really arrived at civilization! Here Roberts teamed with the local Mountie in patrolling several miles of border on horseback. Dope smugglers livened the duty. Large Indian tribal movements back and forth across the border introduced him to problems of diplomacy.

In 1926 assignment to the newly-opened Carway Port put the Roberts family back in tents for a year while the new residence was being built. Here he did the horse-back patrolling alone, the nearest Mountie post being too far away, and found himself no match for the high-powered "rum running" cars then trafficking across the border. The large Indian crossings, involving much horse and wife swapping, made inspection certifications difficult for both veterinarians and immigration officers.

In the early 1930s the new entry port of Chief Mountain was opened, and Roberts was detailed to it on temporary duty, arriving in March to a ten-foot tent. Again quoting Mrs. Roberts:

"Unfortunately, the road was not yet completed on the U.S. side, so not only was there no traffic--once in it proved difficult to get out. The Canadian road crew conveniently dug a deep ditch across the new road a half mile north of the border to install a culvert, and left it open while it rained, and rained, and rained. It also snowed and collapsed the tent onto the sleeping Roberts!

"The desk was a small round table, upon which he would write permits in longhand. A wooden apple box served as a filing cabinet. The tent was office, kitchen and sleeping quarters all in one. The outside facilities consisted of a set of poles with burlap wrapping around three sides--open to the timber. The bear came every night and played havoc with the roll of toilet paper; a mail order catalog might have proved more practical.

"Towards the end of summer a permanent officer was sent in, and Mr. Roberts returned to his post at Carway."

Mrs. Roberts now lives in Moscow with her son, William Stanley Roberts, and his wife.

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Pioneering, anyone?

LATAH COUNTY
MUSEUM SOCIETY
110 South Adams
Moscow, Idaho 83843

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