

LATAH COUNTY MUSEUM SOCIETY

McConnell Mansion 110 South Adams Moscow, Idaho

Quarterly Bulletin
Kenneth B. Platt, Editor

Volume 6, No. 2
April, 1977

Not even the pioneers ever saw such a winter as that just now closing, with more snow dropped on the Bitter Root Mountains in March than in Dec-Jan-Feb combined! The Palouse Country joined a winter drouth onto one of the driest falls on record. Much fall-planted wheat in the western portion failed to come up. The ground continues too dry there for spring planting. In more favored areas farmers report only about 16-18 inches of moisture penetration even now. In the mountains snow packs are so meager throughout the Columbia River drainage, and reservoir storage so low, that dire shortages of streamflow for irrigation and power production are foreseen.

A side effect of this non-winter "winter" was that the Society's building fund plans stood still because all local builders were too busy throughout the season to make the detailed cost estimates needed to launch a funding drive. Whereas excavation work for house building normally stops for from three to four months, this winter saw no interruption. A preliminary look at the work to be done in excavating the remainder of the McConnell Mansion basement area, pouring new concrete foundation walls, and making this space usable did confirm the earlier rough estimate of \$50,000 as a probable minimum cost.

We regret there is nothing further to report on this front.

The possibility of getting auxiliary museum storage and display space in the present city-county library (one block away) when the new library now planned is built was placed before the Library Board at its

February meeting. The Society informed the Board of its interest in retaining the present library building as an example of Spanish mission architectural style rare in this area, and suggested a joint use of it to house the archival collections of both organizations and to serve as a children's historical exhibit and reading area. No formal response of the Library Board has been received.

Meanwhile, an Idaho State Historical Society listing of pioneer buildings in Moscow proposed for entry in the National Register of historic buildings recommended for preservation, though not including the library, did name four structures the Society endorses. These are the McConnell-Maguire Building (1891), later Williamson's store and now occupied by Brown's Furniture and the Thatuna Apartments; the Skattaboe Building (1893), now occupied by General Telephone Company; the former Lieuallen residence (1884) at First and Almon, now an apartment house; and the former Mason Cornwall residence (1889) at Third and Hayes, now occupied by the Richard Edelblute family. Each of these buildings has its own historic and architectural appeal. Listing in the National Registry does not prohibit present owners from altering or even razing the buildings but does make them eligible to receive certain federal funds on a matching basis for restoration and preservation of their historic values.

The Oral History project moved ahead during the last quarter, mostly on transcriptions. Rachel Foxman, who began full-time work under CETA funding in February, completed 46.5 tape hours of rough-to-final transcribing (1074 pages of typed material) and 7.7 hours of initial transcribing (124 pages). Completion of transcribing work is expected to take about another year at this rate.

Sam Schragger has brought the indexing of the collection by name of narrator, place of residence, and by major occupation near completion. Reproduction of this index in the form of an Oral History Directory for distribution to selected libraries, museums, and historical

societies is expected to be finished by the end of April. Plans for archival copying of original tapes also are under way, with the U. of I. Library sharing the \$1000-\$1400 total cost.

Publications activities saw little progress despite much work. Opal Ross's Fields and Pine Trees still languishes, now awaiting binding. Editing of the extensive Munson manuscript preparatory to copying in form to submit for publication cost estimates has taken scores of hours by each member of the Publications Committee. This work now nears completion. Because it has more than local interest, the committee believes the Munson story should have a larger printing than most of our local history series. Publication costs of this work will be high even for a limited edition, and funding assistance will be sought as soon as publication-ready copies are available to send to prospective donors.

With actual publication of the Munson story now seen as several months away, a new and shorter manuscript has been scheduled for publication as Local History Paper No. 3. This is a Moscow-based story by Carol Ririe Brink (see Book Reviews). Mrs. Brink's generous donation of this story to the Society brings to our series a recognized author's name whose national familiarity should benefit our publication efforts far beyond the immediate value of the donation itself. The manuscript already is being type-set, with an initial printing of 500 copies contemplated.

How to make our publications known more than locally is a problem faced with each new work undertaken. Taking advantage of Mrs. Brink's national reputation, the Publications Committee now plans to print a small flyer listing all existing and prospective publications of the Society for mailing to libraries and bookstores throughout the Northwest and to listing agencies elsewhere. A supply of these flyers also will be taken to the Idaho Book Fair at Boise, June 12, for handouts in connection with a display of both the Society's

publications and those of other Latah County authors. The fair, sponsored by the Idaho Writers' League, features Idaho authors and helps publicize their works.

As we go to print, closing of the Time Capsule is at hand. This event was delayed until we could get farm soil profile samples taken this spring. This has now been done, and chemical analyses by the Soils Department of the University are proceeding. A complete listing of the capsule contents will be given to newspapers for final publicity on the project.

Donations of work and materials by the University Physics Department in constructing the capsule, by the Soil Conservation Service in taking the soil samples and mapping their field sites accurately enough for comparison sampling in 2076, and by the Soils Department of the University in chemically analyzing the samples have benefited the project to well over a thousand dollars. Cash donations of \$150 noted in the January Bulletin have covered the costs of microfilm, sound recording, and aerial map purchases. All other inclusions have been donated.

Book Reviews

Four Girls on a Homestead, by Carol Ririe Brink, is a special prize for Latah County readers. Both the author and her subjects are local people remembered by many of their contemporaries. The story is both historically interesting and personally charming. The homestead and the girls are real, the 1911 outpost in untouched forest northeast of Clarkia, the experiences as fresh and virginal as the actors and the setting. Four high school girls summering with Carol's aunt found adventure at every turn. Two samples, for flavor:

"Aunt was a leader of a Sunday School class at home. . . . When she told she was taking us to call on the Clarkia saloon keeper's wife we were shocked. . . .

But it seemed that Madame Pierre was a very proper person, and one to be reckoned with. . . .

"With mixed feelings of terror and awe, we followed through the saloon, which was empty at this time of day. I have a vague impression of a dusky interior with sawdust on the floor and rows of shining glasses on a shelf, and then we entered the back room where Madame and her husband lived. It was clean and tidy to the last degree. Even the stove, which was not in use during the summer months, was draped with a white lace curtain and tied with a bow of pink ribbon. Madame herself was a little round French woman with expressive white hands and wings of black hair laid smoothly back on either side of her tranquil brow. She had a little white dog who frisked and barked and licked our hands.

"With charming old-world formality Madame greeted us and served us small glasses of delicious, non-alcoholic, white grape juice, the like of which I have never tasted since.

"Madame was a genuine personality. In this tiny room behind a saloon on the edge of a rough Western frontier, she had managed to create an atmosphere of charm, respectability, and middle-class propriety. I am sure that the Saturday night revels of the men from the timber must always have been tempered by Madame's lace curtains and pink bows and her elegant sobriety."

* * * * *

"We were always looking for excitement and the kind of romantic adventure which we had met in books but never in real life. Aunt used to laugh tolerantly at us when she heard us wishing for a handsome outlaw escaping from justice whom we might hide and protect from danger. Of course, our imaginary outlaws were always more sinned against than sinning, and they were always paragons of masculine beauty. . . .

"'Well, I'd furnish you one if I could,' said Aunt,

'but I'm afraid the best I can do is to make you a cocoanut cake for supper.' We sighed. . . .

"A few days later Aunt went up the valley to borrow a tool from another homesteader. . . . When she came back she brought a strange man with her! He didn't have the perfect aquiline beauty of the storybook hero, but he looked dark and mysterious and reasonably handsome. We saw at once that he was not a lumberjack. He had clean hands and neat boots, and he used good grammar when he spoke!

"'Girls,' said Aunt, in a tone which somehow implied that things were not as they should be, 'this is Mr. Bunyan. I have told him that we would give him dinner.'

"The strange man simply nodded to us and, sitting on the front step, began to clean and load his gun.

"'Bunyan?' we asked incredulously.

"'Yes. Paul,' Aunt whispered as she set another place at the table. 'It seems awfully strange to me, but that's what he told me. I met him on the trail.'

"'A name like that,' said Spike in a hushed voice. . . . 'it must be assumed.'

"We all nodded.

"Paul Bunyan washed fastidiously, but, when he came to the table, he propped his gun on the chair beside him and laid a pistol ready to hand on the table. He ate in silence, casting furtive glances through the windows and door as if he expected to see a hostile face looking in. Aunt kept up her usual polite table chatter, but the strange man would not be drawn into it. . . .

"The four of us sat in silence almost as heavy as his.

"'Now, Mr. Bunyan,' Aunt said, 'you look tired and it is pretty late in the afternoon to reach the cabins by

the river. If you like you may sleep in our barn tonight. I can assure you it is a safe place.'

"'Safe?' asked Paul Bunyan in a hollow voice. 'You think that you are not likely to have visitors from the outside?'

"If we wrote accounts home of the Paul Bunyan episode they have been lost, but the memory of our romantic outlaw is still very clear to me. We had several hours of thrilled awe. . . . Then we began to wonder if we really did want a handsome outlaw after all. . . .

"Only gradually did it dawn on us that we were being hoodwinked. We intercepted a knowing glance or two between Aunt and the stranger, and our suspicions began to mount. At last we realized that we were the victims of a hoax. . . . Aunt had been introduced to a pleasant young man at her neighbor's and, when she saw that he was so impressively armed and found that he was coming down our way, she suddenly determined to give us our hearts' desire. We were absolutely taken in."

* * * * *

At the end of summer Carol and her three chums stepped back through the looking glass into sedate Moscow, there to find their "outlaw" in his true self as a botany teacher. But, as this story shows, the glamor of that chapter in their lives is yet unfaded in memory. And is not this the essence of un-reliable experience for us all? Four Girls on a Homestead brims with this elusive but priceless quality. It is further enhanced by numerous pen sketch illustrations by the author depicting memorable scenes, as well as by several photos.

Just released by Ye Galleon Press of Fairfield, Wash., is another gem of local history, though of a different cut. "Incidents in the Early History of Pullman and the State College of Washington," by Judge Thomas

Neill, is a straightforward unsentimental account based on first-hand observation. As founder of the Pullman Herald, Neill began publishing Pullman history as early as 1889. An introduction by present history professor Lawrence R. Stark of WSU untangles the legend of the founding of Pullman, which became confused in a series of articles in the Pullman Herald in the 1920s. The present publication is essentially a reprinting of those articles. Twenty-five photo illustrations add much to both visual and documentary interest.

Of even greater interest than the founding of Pullman is the documentation of the founding of WSU. Northern Idaho citizens today frequently are braced with the question: Why was the University of Idaho located so close to WSU? The correct answer, unknown to many, is that the U. of I. was not located "so close to WSU"-- it was established in 1889, three years before Pullman was finally selected as the site for the then Washington Agricultural College and School of Science and before first appropriations were made for construction. The earliest building on the campus, "the Crib," built in 1891, was built by local subscription to put pressure on the state's site selection commission to locate the college there. Now here is handy proof of the University of Idaho's precedence.

As Neill's history also reveals, from 1889 to 1891 other possible sites, including Seattle, Yakima, Colfax, and several other Palouse Country towns were under consideration. The political infighting that at last landed the college at Pullman makes lively reading, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

"The commissioners inspected the various sites that were offered, most of which were in Whitman County, and then met in Olympia to render their decision. Paul Shultz, the political representative of the Northern Pacific Railroad company, and Mr. Snively of Yakima commenced to exert a powerful influence to get the commission to locate the college at Yakima. E. H. Letterman, Dr. Webb, Mr. Farris and the writer went to Olympia to be in touch with the commissioners and to see that Pullman got a square deal.

"The commissioners met on Tuesday and adjourned from day to day without a decision, and on Friday they adjourned until Saturday afternoon at two o'clock and the commissioners went to Tacoma. We had learned that one of the commissioners was in favor of Yakima, one in favor of Pullman, and the third one had not expressed himself as being favorable to either Pullman or Yakima. Knowing that Paul Schultz lived at Tacoma, the Pullman delegation realized the danger of this trip of the commissioners to that city. Mr. Farris followed them. There was then only one train from Tacoma to Olympia in the forenoon and one boat. On Saturday morning Mr. Farris saw two commissioners board the train for Olympia, but the one favorable to Pullman was not there. He then went to the wharf and found that he was not on the boat for Olympia. He then went to the hotel and found the missing member in bed with a headache. Mr. Farris chartered a locomotive and car and got the commissioner aboard and landed in Olympia at 1:30 p.m.

"What took place between Governor Laughton, Mr. Stevenson and the commissioners is only hearsay, so far as the writer is concerned, but there was some plain language used. The afternoon wore away without results and we then feared that the scheme was to hold the decision until after the office of the secretary of state had closed, so that the decision could not be filed until Monday morning, which would give the opposition time to sue out an injunction. To prevent the possibility of such a move, arrangements were made with the secretary of state to keep his office open as long as the commissioners were in session.

"About 11 o'clock p.m. we were asked to make a deed for the land that Pullman was offering for a college site, and to execute a bond guaranteeing a good title. We had not contemplated that we would be requested to furnish a deed prior to the location, but nevertheless we made the deed and gave the bond and the commissioners accepted them and made their decision locating the college at Pullman and their decision was filed with the secretary of state a few minutes after 12:00 o'clock Sunday morning."

At the Museum

A succession of group meetings and lecture presentations comprised a busy schedule at the Museum through the winter quarter. Included were:

Delivery of a paper on Pawnee Indian culture to a group of English major students by U. of I. Professor Jack Davis on January 24.

A DAR meeting, with Good Citizen award presentation to John Reed, MHS senior, on February 21.

The annual Green Tea of the Historical Club on March 11.

A PEO (women's organization) chapter meeting on March 21.

The initiation meeting of Eta Sigma Phi, University of Idaho classical studies honorary fraternity on March 27.

Curator Lee Magnuson reviewed McConnell Mansion history for the Historical Club and DAR groups. The Green Tea event drew an attendance of 50. Hostesses were Laura Bartell, Beth Mickey, Mabel Gano, Elizabeth Gaston, and Jennie Nesbit.

Visitors for the period totaled 274. Special groups touring the Museum included a Moscow High School history class of 25, a University of Idaho English class of 12 led by Prof. David Barber, and the Montana State University women's basketball squad of 15.

New exhibits recently installed or under construction are reported by the Curator as follows:

Pioneer Healers--an exhibit about early doctors in Latah County, featuring the buffalo coat worn by Dr. Clarke, medicine kits, and photos of early doctors of the area.

Scandinavian Immigrants--In 1900 Latah County had more residents of Swedish and Norwegian extraction than any other part of Idaho. These people brought many interesting customs, crafts, and mementoes of their first homeland, and this exhibit displays some surviving artifacts and examples of Scandinavian culture.

Early Moscow Craftsmanship--The work of George Moody. George Moody was the first monument carver and salesman in Moscow, coming here in 1892. His business supplied most of the gravestones in the Moscow and nearby cemeteries. His work was highly esteemed, and some patrons even had him sign his name on the stones he produced. An exhibit has been developed, showing Moody's tools, desk, documents, and examples of his work, on grave stones, memorial statues, and small marble sculptures.

Mining in Latah County--With the expert help of Mr. Frank Milbert of Potlatch an exhibit will depict the life and work of early gold miners in Latah County. Photographs of mines and miners and equipment used by some of the earliest adventurers of the county will be included.

DID YOU KNOW?

That the Society is interested in building up its collection of old photographs of Latah County and its early residents?

That you can give a membership in the Society to a son or daughter or to a friend for only \$5.00 a year? That this might make a nice birthday gift to someone?

That present membership in the Society totals 230?

That of 70 persons who received renewal notices with the January issue of the Bulletin 29 have responded by renewing their membership? Are you one who forgot to do so?

That with public school out soon the McConnell Mansion is a wonderful place for families to bring their children for an interesting afternoon during the summer?

That there are other museums to visit in the area? A partial list includes the University of Idaho Museum, located in the Faculty Office Complex West; the Appaloosa Horse Club on the Pullman Road near Moscow; the Luna House Museum at 310 3rd St. in Lewiston; the Three Forks Pioneer Village near Albion, Wash.; the Newspaper and Printing Museum at Palouse, Wash.; the Twin Meadows Museum at Uniontown, Wash.; the museum of North Idaho on the North Idaho College campus at Coeur d'Alene; the Asotin County Merchant Historical Museum at Asotin, Wash.; the Perkins House at Colfax; the Clearwater County Museum at Orofino; and the Castle at Juliaetta. Spokane has a number of museums, among them the Clark Mansion at W. 2208 2nd Ave.; the Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum and Grace Campbell House at W. 2316 1st Ave.; the Fort Wright College Historical Museum on the campus of Fort Wright College; the Pacific Northwest Indian Center at E. 200 Cataldo; and the Spokane Valley Pioneer Museum at E. 10303 Sprague.

REMINISCING WITH THE PIONEERS

The booklets based on our oral history tapes have proved to be popular with the grade school students for whom they were designed, but they also contain much that is of interest to the mature reader. Possibly not all members of the Society are aware that the booklets are available for purchase by individuals, as well as by schools.

Titles in print at present are: "Homesteading in the Valley of Park As Told by Edward Swenson," "Arthur Bjerke: Frontier Days in the White Pine Country," "Carl Olson's Story," "Emmett Utt: Adventures of an Idaho Boy," and "Lola Gamble Clyde: Pioneer Days and Ways in North Idaho." Copies may be purchased for \$1.00 per booklet at the McConnell Mansion.

Here is a sampling from the Lola Clyde booklet:

"Tom Tierney was the first white man to file a homestead in Latah County. He settled west of Genesee in 1870. The first of many covered wagon trains came in 1871. Uncle Billy Taylor /grandfather of Alma Lauder Keeling/ was among those in the very first wagon train to come to Tat-kin-mah /Indian name for the valley where Moscow is situated/. It is said that his place was always open to the new people that came after he did. He already had an orchard, a garden, and cows when the big wagon trains began to arrive in Moscow in 1877. One of these trains came from Kansas. The people had been forced to leave because grasshoppers had eaten their crops two years in a row. They came to Idaho because some relatives had written glowing reports of the country. I often heard the old-timers say how glad they were to meet their friends and relatives at Uncle Billy Taylor's place. He came out to them and said, 'You folks just circle your wagons right here and stay. I have a garden and my trees have fruit. We have milk and there's lots of water.' Some people camped there as long as six months while they looked for homesteads of their own."

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"Sunday was the social event of the week for the pioneers. It gave them a chance to get cleaned up, to go out and to meet with other people. They combined going to church and visiting. Often they took their lunches with them and made a picnic out of it in the good weather. They would pray, spend time with their neighbors, and have a nice dinner before going home. Father . . . would ride around the country and preach in the little log schoolhouses.

"My father told about the first wedding he conducted in Moscow. He noticed a young couple that was very interested in religion. Every time he spoke at some little schoolhouse, this nice girl and her escort came on horseback. One day they rode over to my father's homestead cabin. The groom brought half a sack of hand-shelled navy beans. He had spent the winter

shelling those beans as the wedding fee for the minister. There was very little money in those days, so my father was often given his fee in food. Everyone paid or traded with goods."

* * * * *

"For many of the pioneers the most trying year was 1893. The depression in the United States that year was bad enough. But in this region most of the crops were lost in a wet harvest. The rain started in the middle of August and did not let up. The grain was too wet to cut. It sprouted standing in the fields. I heard my mother say that you could look out over a field of ripe, yellow grain and there would be an inch of green on the top. It had started to grow over again. She said the whole area smelled of rotting grain. There were hundreds and hundreds of farmers struggling along who couldn't pay their debts that fall."

* * * * *

"It was very important to the pioneers to give their children an education. Almost the first thing they did when they got to this country was to start schools The life of the entire community centered around the schools. It was customary on weekends to have play parties in the rural schools. Everyone in the neighborhood came and shared in what the children of the school were doing. All ages came, from babies to grandparents. Even the hired men came.

"Often the school children would start out with their program. Each child would have a recitation, or perhaps the children would put on a little play. When the program was over, the adults would push aside the desks and chairs and everyone would play singing games. . . . There was 'Skip to My Lou' with all forty or more verses. Each person who came from a different section of the country would add a few verses he had learned back there. Many times they made up verses as they went along. . . . There were games that they played without singing, like 'Spin the Platter'. . . . We also played team games like 'Charades' and 'Cross

Questions, Silly Answers.' After the games they would have a lunch and visit some before going home. These parties were usually in the winter, because in the summer everybody was busy putting in crops and harvesting them. In the winter, the evenings were long and there was time to get together and be sociable. There was very little outside entertainment."

FINANCIAL REPORT

For the period 1-1-77 to 3-31-77

Balance 1-1-77		\$ 7,231.25
County	\$4,500.00	
Dues	220.50	
Publications	18.00	
Donations	54.00	
Door Donations	61.45	
Oral History Donations	29.00	
Miscellaneous Income	<u>15.16</u>	
		<u>4,898.11</u>
Total		\$12,129.36

Expenses:

Savings Certificates	\$ 2,000.00
Oral History	90.59
Utilities	612.99
Office	198.44
Taxes and Insurance	166.82
Maintenance	25.33
Display	10.75
Miscellaneous Expenses	<u>42.85</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 3,147.77

Balance--General Checking 3-31-77	\$ 8,981.59
Building Fund--Bank of Idaho	646.72
Savings Certificates--Building Fund	<u>5,300.00</u>
Total	\$14,928.31

--Steve Neilson, Treasurer

LATAH COUNTY
MUSEUM SOCIETY
110 South Adams St.
Moscow, Idaho 83843

Non-profit Organ.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 161
Moscow, Idaho

APRIL CALENDAR

Sunday, April 17--Pioneer Folk Art Show
McConnell Mansion, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Program of ragtime music at 3:00 p.m.
Refreshments following the program

DUES ARE DUE!

Members who received renewal notices with the January issue of the Quarterly Bulletin are reminded to send in yearly dues (\$5.00 individual, \$9.00 family) if they have not already done so. In addition to other benefits of membership, this will assure your receiving future copies of this publication.

MUSEUM HOURS

The hours when the McConnell Mansion is regularly open to the public are:

Wednesday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Telephone 882-1004