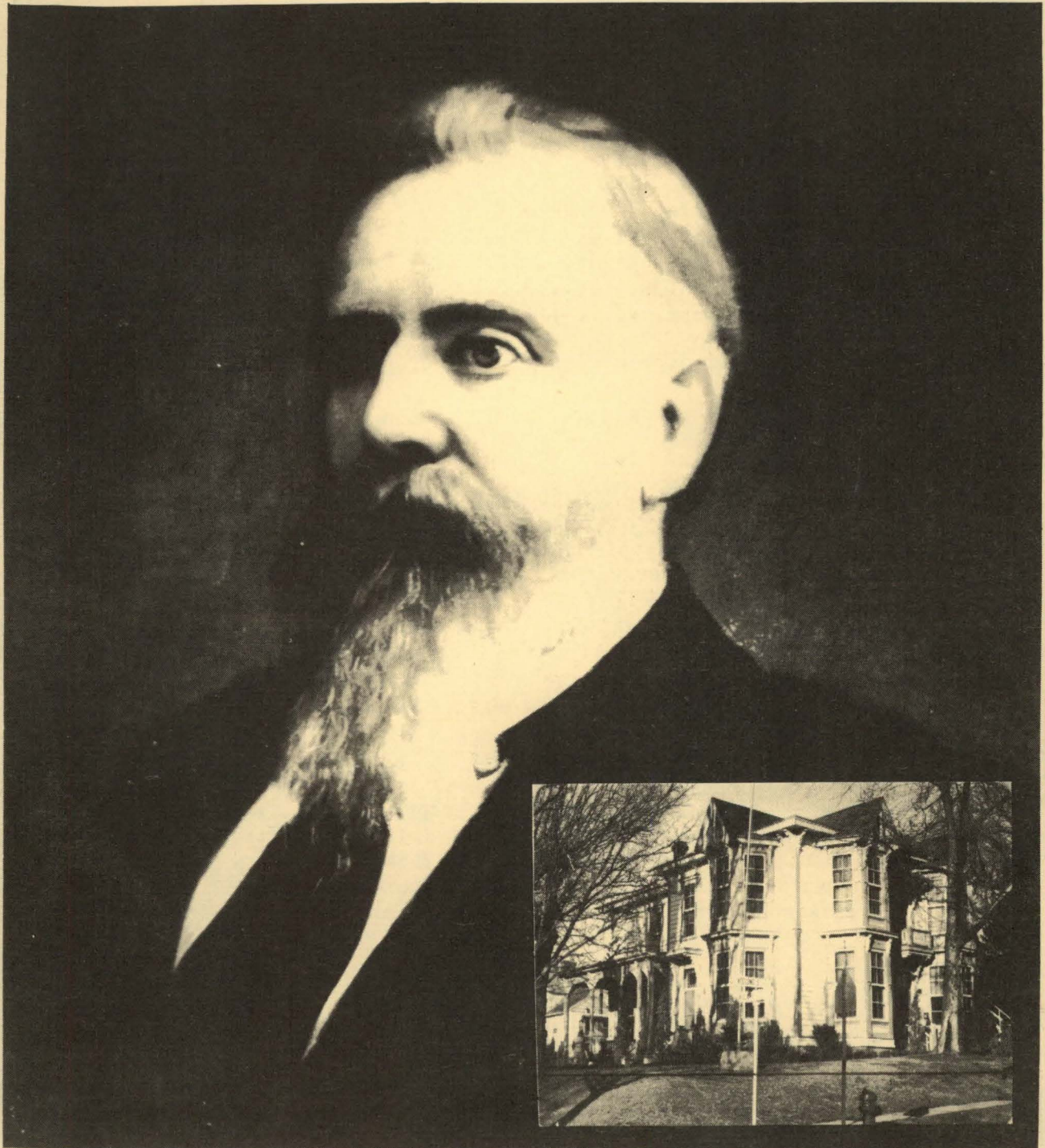

LATAH LEGACY

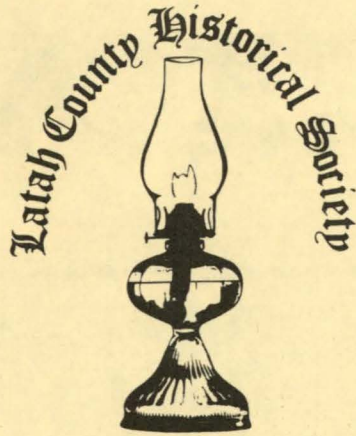
THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE LATAH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



DOUBLE ISSUE: W.J. McConnell and the McConnell Mansion

Fall, 1980 - Winter, 1981

\$1.50



Published quarterly by the Latah County Historical Society, 110 S. Adams, Moscow, Idaho 83843. Subscriptions included in annual membership dues.

Volume 9, Number 4

Volume 10, Number 1

Fall 1980 and Winter 1981

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Cover photos: W. J. McConnell taken from his Governor's portrait that hangs in the back parlor at the Mansion. Inset is the McConnell Mansion. LCHS photos.

THE McCONNELL MANSION

by Karen Broenneke

Editor's note: The McConnell Mansion, focal point of many of the Society's present-day activities, has been a local social center on numerous occasions in the past. In these four selections, Karen Broenneke presents a contemporary look at the Mansion's architectural style, interior, and history. She also provides some new evidence concerning the original construction date.

SECTION 1 -- A SHORT HISTORY

The McConnell Mansion was built in 1886 by W. J. McConnell, the third governor and first United States Senator from Idaho. He first came to Idaho in the 1860s and returned in the spring of 1879, this time choosing Moscow. At the time of his arrival Moscow had a very small but rapidly growing population and was a trade center for the farm families in the area. He opened a general merchandise store on the southeast corner of Main and First Streets with his partner, J. H. Maquire.¹ By 1883 he had become a successful merchant and respected citizen of this area. His family remained in Oregon and he divided his time between his business interests in Moscow and his family. In 1885 he served a term on the Oregon State Legislature.

He was already thinking about settling in Moscow. He purchased a plot of land bordered by Adams Street on the west and Van Buren Street on the east between First and Second Streets.² Construction of the house was begun in the early summer of 1886 and completed by the end of December of that year. His family moved in on Christmas Eve with the help of their new neighbors who gave them a housewarming party that evening.³ McConnell continued to prosper and in 1891 he decided to reconstruct his store building. He enlarged it considerably, adding two more floors and a mezzanine.⁴

In 1893 there was a world-wide depression. Unfortunately, in that same year there was a wet harvest in the Palouse. It started raining late in the summer and did not stop long enough for the soil to dry out until after the crops were ruined. Steam powered farm machinery had not come to the Palouse by 1893. The rolling and hilly character of the land often required large teams of horses or mules to pull the heavy harvesting equipment through the fields. The use of as many as twenty animals pulling a combine required a large area just to turn the whole team around. One can imagine the condition the land would be in if this were accomplished on rain-soaked soil, comparing it with simply walking through a muddy garden.

Wheat was the predominant crop here at that time. The farmers lost all hope of recovering their investment or repaying their loans when the kernels of grain sprouted on the stalks in the field, destroying the usefulness of the crop. The combination of international financial problems and a local crop failure was too heavy a blow for many of the inhabitants of this area. Many farmers lost their farms, the bank closed for awhile, and merchants who had extended credit to the farmers in the spring, expecting to be paid back in the fall as usual, were not able to pay their own creditors. McCon-



Garden party behind the McConnell mansion held by Mrs. McConnell. LCHS photo.

* * *

nell went bankrupt. He lost his store as well as his grain elevator in Moscow and another store and grain warehouse in Pullman. His wife Louisa declared their home a homestead that year and they were able to keep it a few more years. The law allowed a person to retain a certain amount of personal property in a situation of bankruptcy to sustain themselves and their families.

McConnell began his first term as Governor of Idaho that year under these most trying of circumstances. His daughter Mary, or Mamie as she preferred to be called, accompanied him to Boise to serve as hostess and part-time secretary. His wife was a shy woman and preferred to remain in Moscow to provide a home for the younger children. While Mamie was in Boise she met and married a successful young lawyer,

William E. Borah, who assisted her father. Borah became a United States Senator from Idaho and she spent much of her adult life in Washington, D.C. At the age of 96 Mamie moved to Beaverton, Oregon, to live in a nursing home with her sister. She died in 1976 at the age of 105.

In 1897 when McConnell returned to Moscow at the end of his second term as Governor, he and his family were compelled to give up their home and it reverted to the First National Bank which held the mortgage. The house stood vacant for four year.

In 1901 Dr. W. A. Adair and his family purchased the house and moved in. He was a local physician who had moved to Moscow in 1893 to set up his practice. He chose this area partially because his wife disliked the violent cyclones and electric

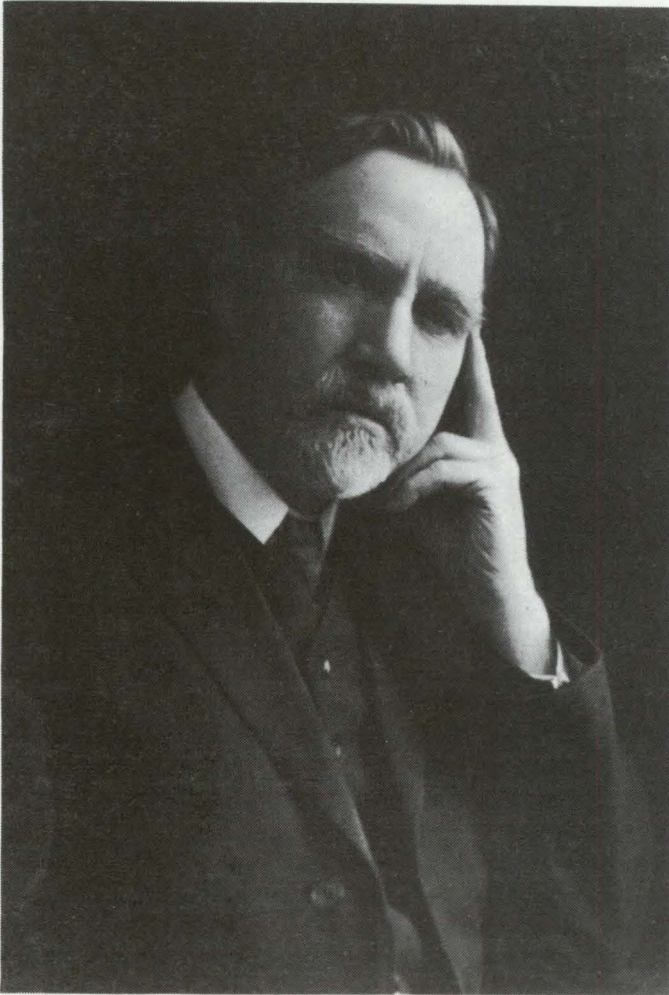


McConnell mansion with Mrs. McConnell standing in the front with her children. LCHS photo.

* * *
storms in Kansas where they had been living. The First National Bank was apparently eager to sell the house. One day while Dr. Adair was in the bank, a teller suggested that he might like to have a larger house and the doctor agreed that he would, but he could not "afford to make the change."⁶ A Mr. Pearson from the Madison Lumber Company was standing nearby and offered to buy the Adair homestead near Bovill to give Dr. Adair the cash to buy the McConnell house if he would be allowed to rent a room from them in the larger house. Almost from the beginning the Adairs rented at least one bedroom to those who needed a place to stay. This practice persisted for their entire occupancy of the house. It was never a "boarding house," however. The people who rented rooms did not eat with the family, but took their meals elsewhere.

* * *
Dr. and Mrs. Adair died in 1934. His daughters were grown by that time with lives of their own. They chose to sell the house and in 1935 Thomas Jackson bought it. The Jackson family moved out of the area in 1940 because Mr. Jackson, who was working for the railroad, was transferred.

Dr. Frederic Church bought the house from the Jacksons and lived in it until he died in 1966. Dr. Church came to Moscow in 1921 to teach history at the University of Idaho. It is said that on his first night in town he rented a room from Mrs. Adair and never slept through another night in any other place in Moscow. The house reminded him of his childhood home in Pennsylvania. His nineteen years as a renter and twenty-six years as owner of the house qualify him as its most stead-



Dr. W. A. Adair. LCHS photo.

* *

fast occupant. After he became the owner he also rented out the upstairs bedrooms, to history students at the University of Idaho if possible. He never married and when he died, he bequeathed the house to the County of Latah:

"to be preserved for the use of the Latah County Pioneers Association; this historical club; and in general, as a meeting place for cultural organizations agreeing to cooperate."⁷

He left the furnishings to a niece and nephew. They very generously supplemented his gift by donating the contents of the house to the County. The County Commissioners accepted the gift in 1967. They hired a caretaker to live in the house to maintain it and to protect it from vandalism.

In 1968 an organization was formed to turn the house into a museum. This volunteer group, called the Latah County Pioneer Historical Museum Association, Inc., later changed to the Latah County Historical Society, spent the next three years cleaning, fixing and decorating the house with great skill and much interest. Dr. Church had been ill the last several years of his life and he had not been able to do the things that these dedicated people accomplished. In 1971 the building was declared a museum of the history of Latah County and its people with a gala open house. The building itself has undergone only minor changes since then and those have been for safety or maintenance purposes.

The interior of the house is partially restored and the two parlors, the dining room and the entrance hall are furnished to reflect a way of life that existed in Moscow and other small towns in the Palouse at the turn of the century. What was originally a back porch and then a bedroom for Dr. and Mrs. Adair is now a research library. The original kitchen, pantry, maid's room and bathroom on the first floor were converted into an apartment for the first museum curator. They are now used as a library reading room, staff kitchen and bathroom, and office for the Curator of Collections, respectively. The upstairs bedrooms have been remodeled as exhibit rooms, a suite of offices for the staff and storage for the textile collection. The attic and basement are also used as storage space for museum objects.

There are many possibilities for the future of the McConnell Mansion. It is hoped that someday nearly every room in the house will reflect the earlier times when the house was new. There are tentative plans to turn the present library reading room back into a turn-of-the-century kitchen (retaining the modern kitchen in the original pantry area), the upstairs exhibit rooms into a master bedroom, a child's bedroom, a playroom and a study. There are also tentative

plans to purchase authentic or reproduction carpeting and redo the wallpaper in the original style. Major exterior maintenance projects are reviewed and implemented as needed if the funds can be obtained. Some renovation is planned to accomodate handicapped persons.

These goals can be accomplished only if the Latah County Historical Society is able to obtain another building for use as a museum. It would be a place to exhibit other aspects of the history of Latah County, provide a research facility, storage for the collections, a meeting room and office space for the staff.

These plans require that a great deal of money be raised, but more importantly, they require a concentrated effort by the citizens of Latah County to preserve their history.

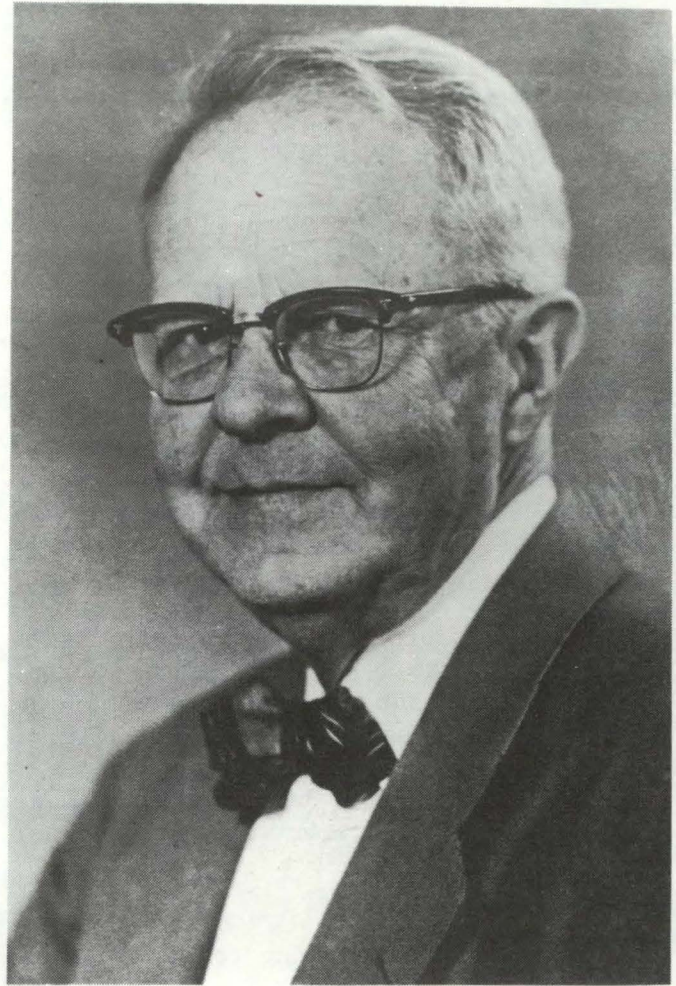
In the meantime, the building will be maintained much as it has been for the last ten years. Minor repairs and maintenance will be performed on an as-needed basis. It is open for tours and other Society business and the public is invited to participate in their own past by visiting the Mansion and taking part in the other activities of the Latah County Historical Society.*

FOOTNOTES

¹W. G. Emery, A History of Moscow, Idaho (Moscow, Idaho: Moscow Mirror, Supplement, 1897). Copies of this article are available at the Latah County Historical Society.

²Personal interview with Tod Kiblen, Latah County Title Company, 6 February 1979.

³Henrik and Bernice Juve, "Memory Book of the Latah County Pioneers, Vol. 1-11," n.d. These memory books are collections of newspaper clippings relating information about Latah County and its inhabitants and are housed at the Latah County Historical Society.



Dr. Frederic Church. LCHS photo.

* *

⁴Keith Petersen, "History of the McConnell Building," Quarterly Bulletin of the Latah County Historical Society, Vol. 7, No. 2, April, 1978.

⁵Emery, A History of Moscow, Idaho.

⁶Ione Adair, interviewed by Sam Schrager, June 8, 1976, through February 24, 1977, Latah County Historical Society Oral History Collection. There are five interviews, each of which relates various details of early life in Moscow and on a homestead.

⁷Holographic Will, Dr. Frederic Church, June 1, 1965. A typed copy of this will is available at the Latah County Historical Society.

SECTION 2 -- DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

There has been some controversy about the date of construction of the McConnell house and conflicting data exists to add to the confusion.

According to the information recorded at the Latah County Title Company, John Russell sold the entire block on which the house stands (bordered by Adams Street on the west, First Street on the north, Van Buren on the east and Second Street on the south) to John Thompson in 1882. Mr. Thompson sold the block to W. J. McConnell in 1883.¹

There is a photograph, labeled "Moscow 1883" (see photo below) on which several buildings have subsequently been identified. One of these, a two-story building located a short distance northeast of the town center, has been identified as the "Wm. J. McConnell Mansion, N.E. corner Adams & 2nd."

On the other hand, the Moscow Mirror, an early Moscow newspaper, seemed to be recording the chronology of the planning and construction of the house starting in May of 1886. The following excerpts from this paper recount the progress: On May 21, the "Hon. W. J. McConnell is in Moscow and intends to make his permanent home here."² Just two weeks later, on June 4, "The family of Hon. W. J. McConnell arrived from Oregon this week and will locate in Moscow. The Senator is arranging to build a brick dwelling house in the Park place" [near the East City Park].³ By July 2, "Teams are busy hauling rock for the foundation of W. J. McConnell's new residence."⁴ By the end of July, "W. J. McConnell's house foundation is about finished and indicates that a fine house will surmount it."⁵ On August 27 the newspaper described the house which was almost completed.

* * *

Moscow in 1883 looking to the southeast toward Paradise Ridge. LCHS photo.



"W. J. McConnell has a family residence in this city nearly finished of imposing structure. It occupies a prominent site overlooking the city. It is a two story building with a basement department. Its appearance indicates comfort and elegance and we are of the opinion that when it is finished it will be a structure of which Moscow may be proud."⁶

On October 22 the weekly newspaper welcomes McConnell and his family to Moscow.

"As soon as his elegant residence which overlooks Moscow from the eminence upon which it is situated is completed, this useful and eminent citizen of Oregon will make this city his permanent home. We welcome him and his family among us. He is not a stranger to our people, for although a resident of Oregon he has for a long time had important business connections here. . . ."⁷

By December 10 the house was apparently finished. "W. J. McConnell will soon oc-

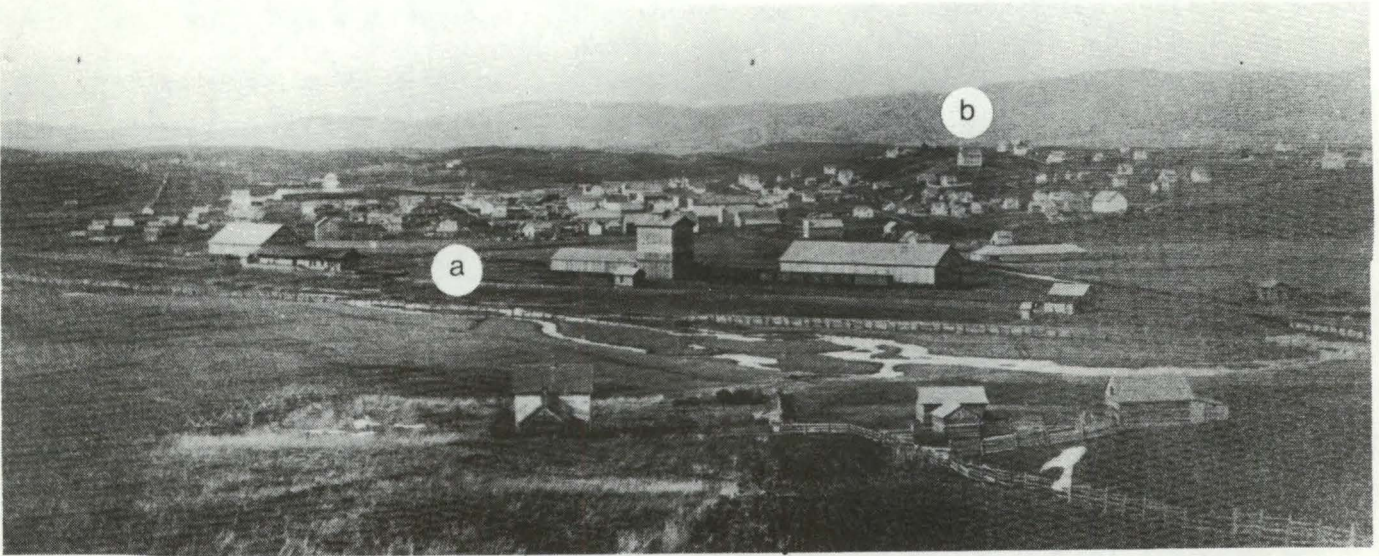
cupy his new residence."⁸ And, finally, on the last day of 1886, the newspaper reports good news. "The wife and family of Hon. W. J. McConnell arrived from Oregon this week and are now nicely ensconced in their new dwelling."⁹

The evidence seems conclusive that the building labeled as the McConnell house in the 1883 photography of Moscow is another building or that the photograph is mislabeled and was actually taken near the end of 1886 or later. In an attempt to clear up this confusion, photographs dated 1885 and 1887 have been examined. In the photograph dated 1885, taken from southwest of town, the railroad yard, labeled "a," and the Russell School, labeled "b," are clearly visible. (The first train came to Moscow in 1885.¹⁰ The original Russell School, the first school building in Moscow, was built in 1884 and was located on the block bordered by A street on the north, First Street on the south, Jefferson Street on the west and Adams Street on the east,

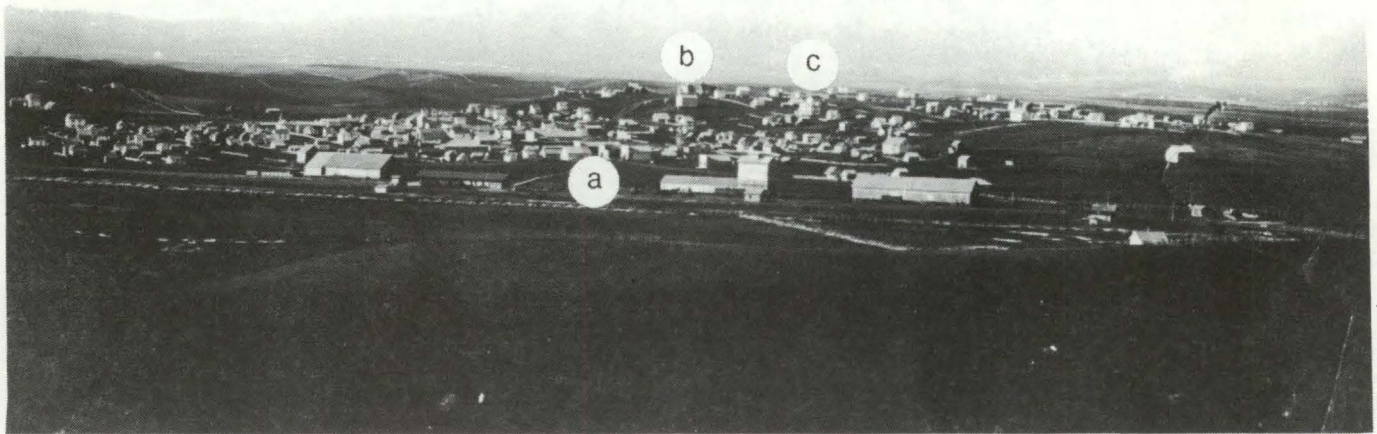
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Moscow in 1979 looking in approximate direction and from the approximate spot as the 1883 photo. LCHS photo.





Moscow in 1885 looking north toward Moscow Mountain. LCHS photo.



Moscow in 1887 from approximately the same spot as the 1885 picture. LCHS photo.

* * *

the same location as that of the "new" Russell Elementary School.¹¹⁾ In the 1887 photograph, taken a little more to the east, the railroad yard and the Russell School, labeled as before, are again clearly visible. The McConnell house, labeled "c," is also clearly visible and, because of its proximity to the Russell School, should have been visible in the 1885 photograph if the house had been built in 1883. Of course, there is also the possibility that these two photographs may be misdated. The combination of factors, however, does lead one to

suspect that the construction of the McConnell house began in June and ended by December of 1886.*

FOOTNOTES

¹Personal interview with Tod Kiblen, Latah County Title Company, 6 February 1979.

²Moscow Mirror, 21 May 1886, p. 3, col. 2.

³Moscow Mirror, 4 June 1886, p. 3, col. 2.

⁴Moscow Mirror, 2 July 1886, p. 3, col. 2.

⁵Moscow Mirror, 23 July 1886, p. 3, col. 1.

⁶Moscow Mirror, 27 August 1886, p. 3, col. 2.

⁷Moscow Mirror, 22 October 1886, p. 3, col. 2.

⁸Moscow Mirror, 10 December 1886, p. 3, col. 1.

⁹Moscow Mirror, 31 December 1886, p. 3, col. 1.

¹⁰Charles J. Munson, Westward to Paradise (Moscow: The University Press of Idaho, 1978), p. 119.

¹¹Mrs. Roland Hodgins, Cavalcade of Moscow Schools, 1940. Unpublished typescript in Latah County Historical Society Archives, SC HOD-1.

SECTION 3 -- ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The house that W. J. McConnell built for his family in Moscow, Idaho, was typical for the period of construction, but atypical for this area where the ornate styles of the east and west coasts were slow to arrive. The popular styles in architecture were often combined in a unique fashion in areas such as the Palouse Country. This eclecticism enabled the inhabitants to live and work in buildings geared to their tastes and to combine the most suitable features of all the styles to suit their personalities.

In 1974 the W. J. McConnell house received National Register of Historic Places status. The architectural style of the house was described in the following way:

"Set on a large corner lot in Moscow, the McConnell house is a large, two-story clapboard¹ dwelling of striking design. Despite alterations both inside and out, the house retains its general style and character which is best described as Eastlake. The tall, narrow look favored in the 1880s is achieved in a series of two-story bays topped with sharp gables. The windows and doors are also quite tall, adding to the vertical effect. Band-sawn decoration is profuse, particularly in the gables, front porch and around

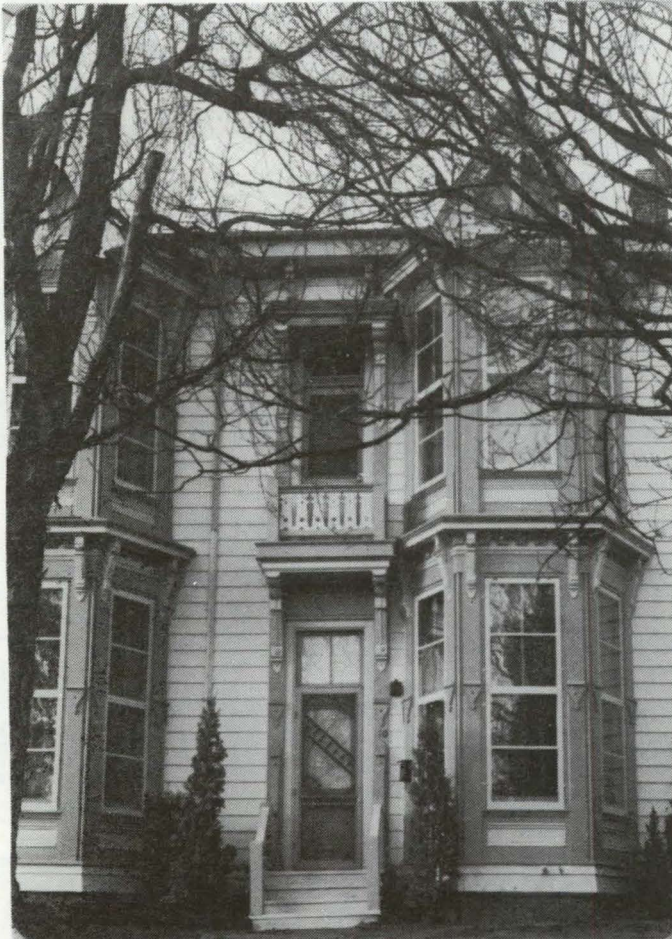
the windows. Elaborage (sic) brackets, with curled edges and cut-out design, support the wide eaves, small roofs over the entryways and the narrow ledges which encircle the bays at midpoint."²

The Eastlake style has not retained its popularity and today is nearly unknown as a distinct style of architecture. Marcus Whiffen in his American Architecture Since 1780 describes Eastlake style in the following manner:

"Most Eastlake buildings would be classifiable as Stick Style or Queen Anne if they were not transmogrified by a distinctive type of ornament. This ornament is largely the product of the chisel, the gouge, and the lathe (and thus fundamentally different from the two-dimensional gingerbread of the scroll saw). Curved brackets are placed wherever curved brackets will go. The posts of porches or verandas, and sometimes the exposed framing members of roofs, often bear a marked resemblance to table legs; rows of spindles - forming openwork friezes or fascias along those same porches or verandas, for example - are much employed. Other borrowings from furniture include

knobs of various forms and decorative motifs consisting of circular perforations."³

The validity of the Eastlake style of architecture and its importance in the development of architecture in the United States has been questioned. Charles Locke Eastlake, a British interior decorator,



South side of the Mansion with the family entrance and balcony. LCHS photo.

* *

wrote a popular book titled Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details.⁴ This book "became the unwitting justification for house plans and furniture. The 'Eastlake' degenerated into meaningless and widespread popularity."⁵ There were doors, mantels, paint, shingles, sinks and door locks advertised as being of the Eastlake type.⁶

Eastlake described his rules of architectural and interior taste and design in his book. He preferred decorative trim to

be honest and straightforward, and described machine produced "scrollwork" as "trash."⁷ "At least eight plans for 'Eastlake' houses were published between 1880 and 1887, but these plans had few common features and quite dissimilar shapes."⁸

William Comstock was a well-known architectural editor and publisher. In his book Modern Architectural Designs and Details, published in 1881, there is a set of drawings labeled "Dwelling House Showing East Lake (sic) Features."⁹ The resemblance between "Eastlake" homes designed in California and those conceived in the east is slight, only including the use of decorative ironwork, which was a common architectural feature of that era, and the braced gable.¹⁰

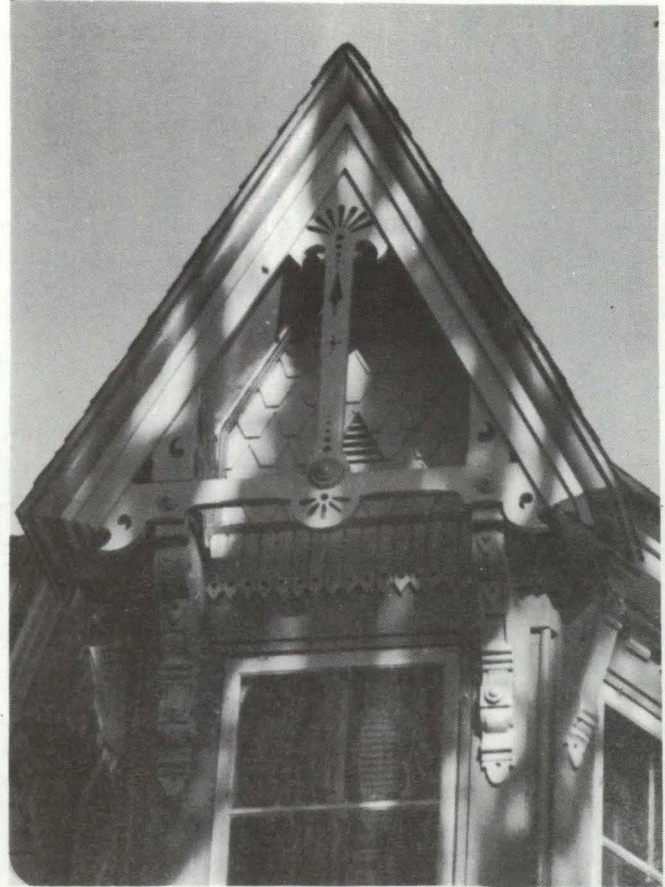
California Architect and Building News waged a campaign against the use of the term "Eastlake" and the style it named. They stated in an editorial that this style was "not a classic order of architecture with defined principles of treatment and rules of application and delineation. . . ."¹¹ The editors of this journal sent Eastlake a copy of their editorial and some plans of "so-called Eastlake houses" and asked him to respond. He stated that he completely agreed with their premise and added the following explanation:

"I now find, to my amazement, that there exists on the other side of the Atlantic an 'Eastlake' style of architecture, which judging from the specimens I have seen illustrated, may be said to burlesque such doctrines of art as I have ventured to maintain. . . . I feel greatly flattered by the popularity which my books have attained in America, but I regret that their author's name should be associated there with a phase of taste in architecture and industrial art with which I can have no real sympathy, and which by all accounts seems to be extravagant and bizarre."¹²

The W. J. McConnell house cannot accurately be described as "Eastlake," not only because the origin and validity of the style itself is in question, but also because only a few of the features of the house can be described in terms of the elements of the style. There are curved brackets, but they are not profuse. The balusters on the porches are flat rather than round and do not resemble table legs. Some three dimensional ornamentation does exist, but its form does not remind one of furniture trim.

The house exhibits some elements of the Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne styles. "The most distinguishing feature of the

Victorian Gothic style is the polychromatic exterior finish."¹³ The original colors of the house were a light tan and



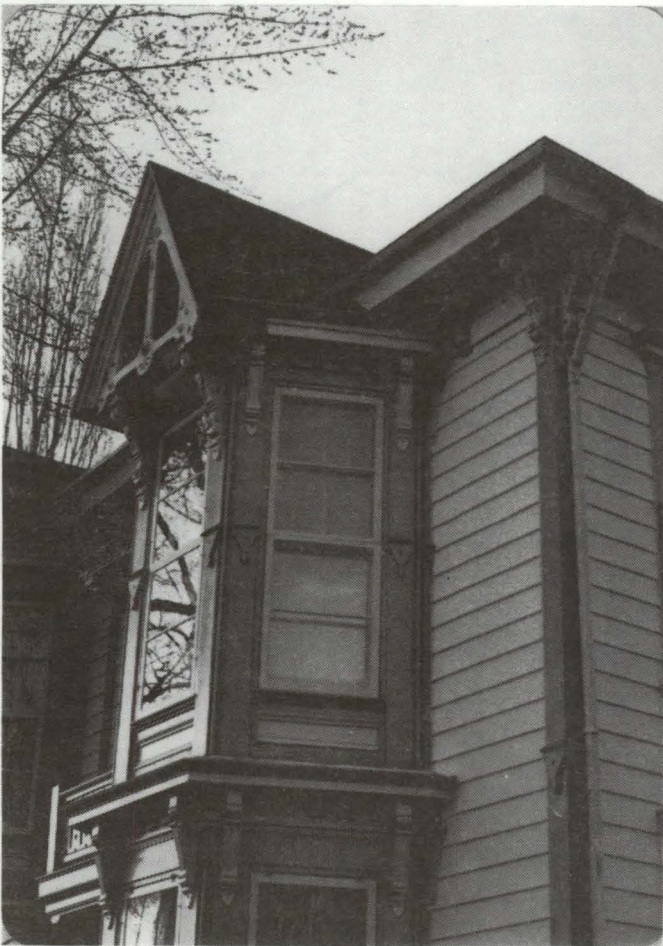
Gable of the Mansion with decorative scrollwork. LCHS photo.

* *

a reddish brown tone for the trim and the same tan for the siding. The darker shade was produced by applying varnish to Douglas fir, a red tinted wood. The use of more than one color allowed the ornate trim and other special architectural features to be highlighted. Geometric shapes and patterns are used to decorate the surface of the building.

The Queen Anne style is varied, decoratively rich and usually asymmetrical.¹⁴ The bay windows, covered balcony and colored glass panel over the front door reflect this style of architecture on the McConnell house.

Even though there is a mixture of architectural elements from the three styles discussed briefly, the overall effect is unified and elegant. We can appreciate the beauty of the unique design the house has maintained throughout the years be-



Southeast corner of the Mansion. Note decorative detail on the roof corner and the gable. LCHS photo.

cause of its eclectic quality rather than in spite of it.

Mr. McConnell probably did not hire an architect to design the house. It was most likely designed using plans from a plan book combined with ideas from the owner and built by a local carpenter. This was a very popular method during the Victorian era.*

FOOTNOTES

¹The original siding on the house is drop siding which is completely covered by Alseco Premium 30 with Dupont Tedlar coated siding installed sometime after 1964 in the clapboard style.

²Nancy F. Renk, "Nomination Form for the W. J. McConnell House" (Boise: National Register of Historic Places Inventory, 1972).

³Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1969), p. 123.

⁴Charles Locke Eastlake, Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1877).

⁵Carol Olwell and Judith Lynch Waldhorn, A Gift to the Street (San Francisco: Antelope Island Press, 1976), pp. 164-165.

⁶California Architect and Building News (n. p.: n. p., October, 1885), p. 180, hereafter cited as CABN, as quoted in Olwell and Waldhorn, A Gift, p. 165.

⁷Eastlake, Hints, pp. 51-52 and 59-60.



Mansion before 3-color paint and restorative work on south balcony. LCHS photo.

⁸Olwell and Waldhorn, A Gift, p. 165.

⁹William F. Comstock, Modern Architectural Designs and Details (New York: Architectural Publisher, 1881), p. 71; reprinted under the title Victorian Architecture: Two Pattern Books (Watkins Glen, New York: The American Life Foundation & Study Institute, 1967).

¹⁰Olwell and Waldhorn, A Gift, p. 166.

¹¹CABN (n. p.: n. p., October, 1881), p. 97, as quoted in Olwell and Waldhorn, A Gift, p. 167.

¹²CABN (n. p.: n. p., April, 1882), p. 49, as quoted in Olwell and Waldhorn, A Gift, p. 168.

¹³John J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture, A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1977), p. 33.

¹⁴Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture, p. 63.

SECTION 4 -- A GUIDED TOUR

There have been many stories told and re-told about the McConnells and the Adairs-- how they lived and how the house they lived in reflected their way of life. These stories reveal the very human and personal lives of the former owners, but often lack the documentation to call them history. These reminiscences are beyond the scope of this article, but perhaps may be recounted at a later time. The visual impact of the areas of the house that have been arranged to demonstrate the life style of its inhabitants will be described.

When one enters the McConnell Mansion there is a sense of slightly faded elegance and grandeur. One can get a glimpse of days gone by while walking through the rooms of the house that are furnished to resemble the early years of occupancy. Just as the exterior illustrates a combination of styles and decorative elements of the Victorian era, the interior architectural features, furnishings and decor also reflect the period in which the house was new in a variety of ways.

Much that is seen inside the house is original and was in place when the McConnell family moved in on Christmas Eve of 1886. The brass chandeliers in the two parlors originally provided gas light. Dr. Adair had the house wired for

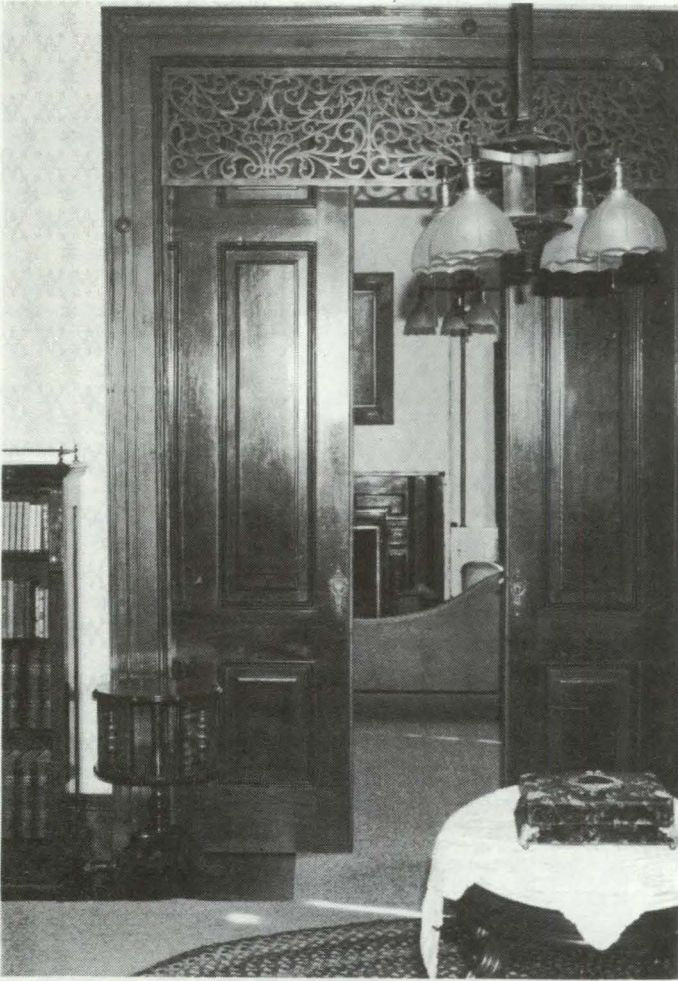
electricity a few years after he bought the house. The glass globes, which came from another older home in Moscow, were probably turned the other way, that is, up for the gas flame instead of down, as they are now, for quick exchange of light bulbs.



Original brass light fixture in the front parlor. LCHS photo.

* *

The shutters at the windows in the parlors, as well as the rest of the house, came from San Francisco. Even though they are nearly one hundred years old, they function very well to exclude light and even some cold air. They are somewhat fragile and require oiling to maintain their usefulness. The wooden cornices



Sliding doors looking from front parlor to back showing carved cornice. LCHS photo.

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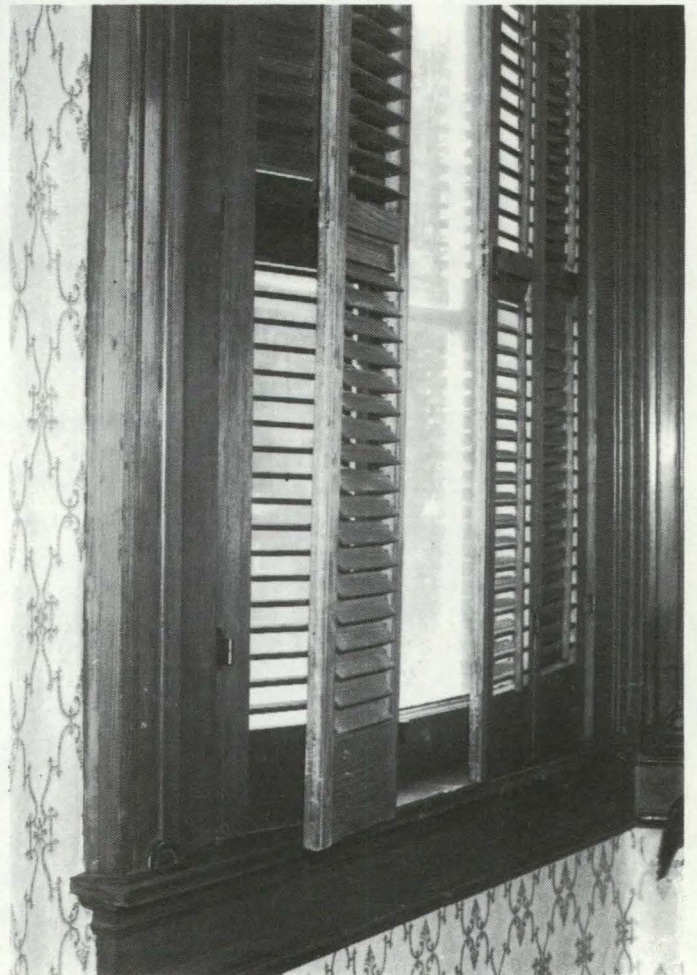
over the bay window areas and the doorway between the two parlors were added by Dr. Adair. It is told that he went "back east" to a medical meeting and, while there, bought some expensive material for curtains to place in front of the bay window areas. When he returned to Moscow he found that the material was too short to fit all of the areas in which he had planned to have it placed. The Adairs were a frugal family and, rather than waste the cloth or use it for another purpose, they decided to have a local artisan, J. J. Anthony¹ hand carve these decorative pieces to shorten the space. After they were put in place nearly a year later the draperies were hung and fit perfectly.

The sliding wooden doors between the parlors are almost never closed now, although

they are still in good working order. Looking closely at the edge of each, one can see a small brass button that, when pushed, forces a handle out of its slot to assist in pulling the doors closed.

All of the interior wood in the house is local pine or fir that has been hand grained (or painted) to look like a more expensive type of wood. In some places, notably the surfaces of the sliding doors between the parlors, the quality of the work has been maintained. In other places, such as the door frame leading to the dining room from the entrance hall, the paint has begun to deteriorate. One can see and feel the cracks on the surface of the wood here.

This type of decorative art typifies a characteristic of the late Victorian



Maple finish shutters in parlors with hook latches. LCHS photo.



Gray-rose marble-faced fireplace with gold trim and black onyx insets. Also shows chairs with light blue Federalist-figured upholstery. LCHS photo.

* * *

period.² Quality was not as important a factor in interior (or exterior) design as was appearance. As long as an object, a room setting or a building looked grand or pretty, it did not matter as much as in earlier time how that look was achieved. Covering a common brick with velvet for use as a doorstep is an example of this idea. The McConnells chose a local, readily available and presumable inexpensive wood for both the interior and exterior of the house, including the floors, and paid a craftsman to make it all look more elaborate and grand than it really was.

The fireplace in the back parlor is another example of this characteristic. It was constructed by placing a thin veneer of Vermont marble over steel and then add-

ing gold leaf and black onyx trim. The fire box is very small because it was designed to burn coal rather than wood. The entire house was originally heated by this fireplace and coal or wood burning stoves in the other rooms. Dr. Adair converted this system to central heating a few years after he purchased the house.

The Industrial Revolution in Europe and America helped make this new idea in decorative art fashionable in furniture and decorative pieces as well. What had in earlier days been slowly and carefully produced by craftsmen and artisans was now being produced in factories by machines and semi-skilled laborers. This mass production led to short cuts and style alterations that became styles in themselves. People came to expect a different

quality in workmanship and materials than they had been used to previously. There were advantages to this revolution, however. Furniture produced this way was less expensive and more people could afford to buy it. Styles solidified and a few became very popular. Exterior trim was mass produced also. Architects, carpenters or home owners could order a wide variety of shapes, sizes and designs to tack on wherever it would best represent their taste.

Only a few pieces of furniture that one sees in the house actually belonged to the McConnells or the Adairs. Care has been taken, however, to display styles of furniture or pieces of decorative art that could have been in the house during its early years of occupancy. Then, as now, people combined various styles, colors,

and textures to reflect the availability of items as well as the owners' taste and life style. Some of the furniture belonged to Dr. Church's mother. (Dr. Church was the last private owner of the house.) She lived in Pennsylvania and, when she died, it was shipped out to Idaho because Dr. Church had a fine home in which to use it. Other pieces have been donated to the Latah County Historical Society for use in the house.

There are a few pieces of furniture that are well documented or particularly interesting in the two parlors. A chair belonging to the McConnells as well as two small tables and a large decorative vase are displayed. The chair is pressed oak with a beige cloth fabric on the seat, back and arms. One of the tables was used



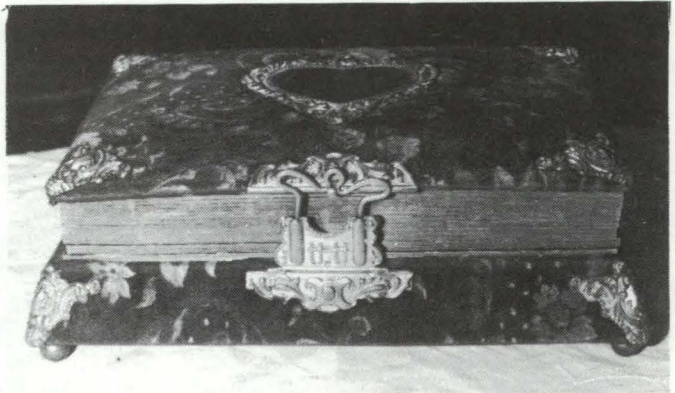
Chair and plant stand belonging to the McConnell's. Chair has beige silk upholstery and pressed oak wood. Also bookcase and lamp stand that belonged to Dr. Church. LCHS photo.

as a plant table and the other as an end table. Both have two shelves. The vase once stood in a niche in the curved wall in the back of the entrance hall. It helped to provide the impressive view a visitor would receive upon entering the house in combination with the long staircase going up to the second floor, the etched glass panel on the "company" door topped by a set of colored glass panes which cast the light from the setting sun on to the objects in the hall with a mixture of colors and tones and the original elegant carpeting and elaborate wallpaper. The bannister for the staircase is said to have been shipped from California in one piece. If one looks closely, a seam can be found about halfway up where the wood was joined at the factory. There was another stairway in the house originally which went from the kitchen to the upstairs bathroom. It was removed when Dr. and Mrs. Adair turned the back porch into a bedroom for themselves as they got older and less able to climb the long staircase.

There are nearly matching bookcases in the front parlor on either side of the



Gold velvet-upholstered fainting couch, now called a chaise lounge. LCHS photo.



Blue velvet-covered music box and photographic portrait album. LCHS photo.

* *

sliding doors between the rooms which belonged to Dr. Church. They each have a rod for curtains just under the top surface although no curtains hang there now. In the center of the room is an oval table with a marble top. Displayed here is a velvet covered photograph album that contains a music box. Photographs of relatives and friends were precious to the early inhabitants of this area. Travel was difficult and expensive and viewing these photographic portraits often replaced frequent visits to loved ones in other parts of the country.

In the back parlor there is a piano which boasts a Sears, Roebuck & Co. label. In their 1902 mail order catalog, a very similar piano sold for \$100. Shipping from Chicago to Moscow, Idaho, added a bit to the cost of the instrument, but it still seems like a bargain. A fainting couch has been placed in the center of this room. During an earlier time when this type of furniture was popular, fashionable women wore tightly cinched corsets which limited their ability to breathe normally. On warm summer evenings or during periods of stress, couches like this one must surely have been useful, supporting a prostrate figure. The large, black arm chair is an early recliner. Attached to its left arm is a metal holder for an ashtray. Obviously, this was not a woman's chair. One can almost picture the man of the house leaning back comfortably for an after-dinner cigar here.



Black leather-like man's chair and footstool. LCHS photo.

* *

The placement of the furniture in a house was dictated by fashion as well as convenience during the Victorian era and was a personal essay of the inhabitants. In earlier times, the style was to line up the various pieces along the walls of a room. The Victorians changed that by placing chairs, tables and decorative pieces in "art groupings." There could be many or only a few in a room, depending on its size and the wealth of the owner. Each was considered an area in itself and they did not have to match the others in any way although a complimentary look was desirable. This often led to the cluttered look which is stereotypically considered an important Victorian style. These groupings were convenient because they were arranged so that the seating area could be lit by a single gas lamp, whether it was hanging from the ceiling or placed on a table. Gas light is usually

soft and provides a relatively narrow cone of light in contrast to electric light which can be harsh and produces a broad light base. A popular phrase which reflects this refinement of decor is, "Style is what you buy at the store, taste is what you do with it."³ The bay window areas in the McConnell Mansion are nearly perfect settings for furniture groupings.

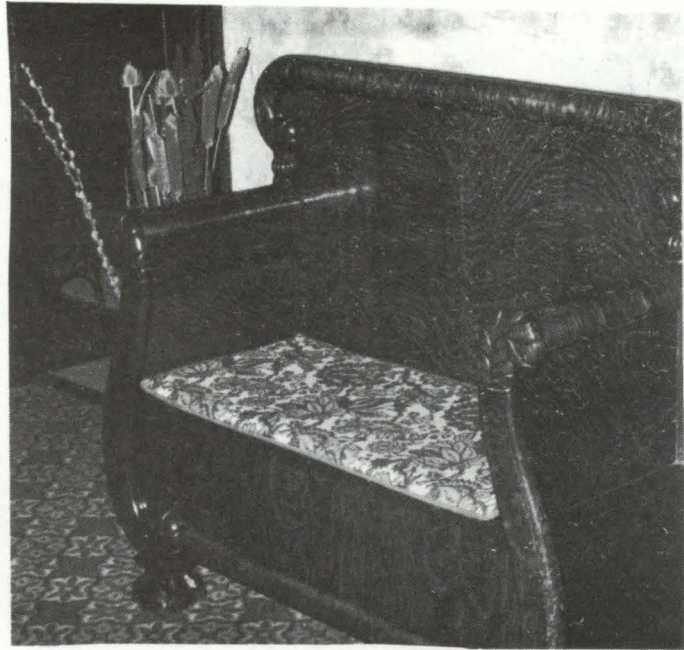
The existence of two parlors precedes the life style of today where there is a living room reserved for special times or adults only and a family room where the living really goes on. During the early occupancy of the house, the front parlor was used for company and special occasions. The best furniture would be placed in this room and the second best in the back parlor. It was often shut off and in the winter the stove was not lit unless company was expected. After the University of Idaho was built and a faculty was hired, the women of the town established calling days, exchanging visits with the faculty wives. Each group had an "at home" day. Women would drop by for refreshments and chat for a bit. The fashionable women of the area had calling cards printed which were left in special dishes by the door. On these days the front parlor would surely have been open and ready for visitors.

The back parlor was the room in which the family would spend their evenings together. The exterior door in this room was the one the family members and close friends used. The back parlor has a door providing access to the back of the house through the central hall.

This end of the hall contains a settee and mirror set that belonged to the Adair family. It was purchased from Creightons Department Store in Moscow and the mirror was hung by the owner, George Creighton and an assistant. There is a very small closet underneath the stairs which is used for storage now. One of the Adair daughters used it as a dark room when she was a young girl.

The bathroom in this hallway was added by Dr. Church after 1940. There are two original bathrooms in the house, one at the top of the stairs and one between the original maid's room and kitchen, behind the dining room. When the house was built the water for the bathrooms and kitchen was obtained from a well near the house. Water was pumped to a large storage tank on the second floor of the house and flowed down for the family's needs by gravity.

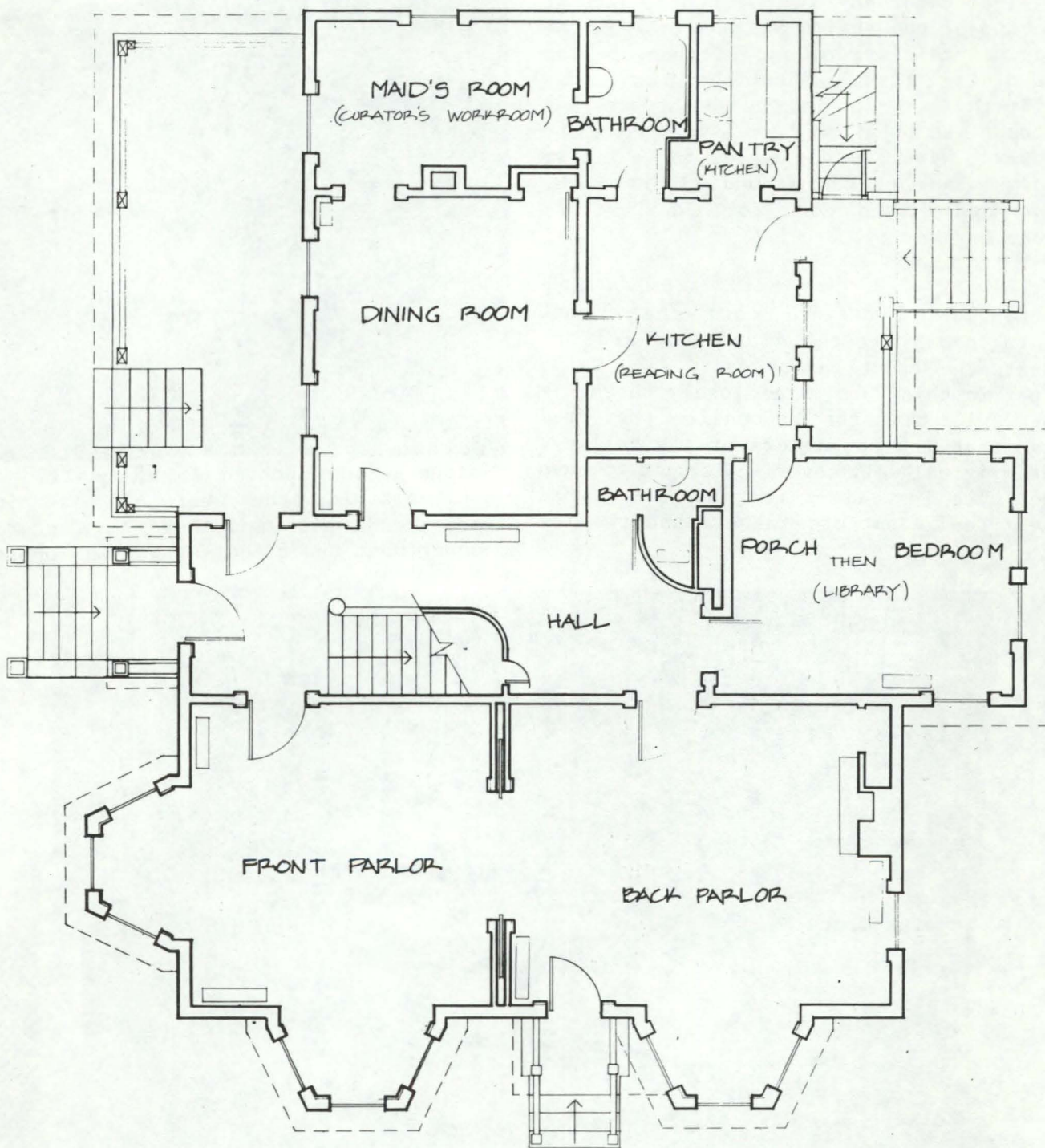
There is an entrance into the formal dining room near the front door and opposite the front parlor door. The wallpaper in this room more closely resembles the style that the McConnells preferred than that in the parlors or the hallway. The original wall covering is said to have been blue instead of red and have a gold fleur-de-lis pattern rather than the in-



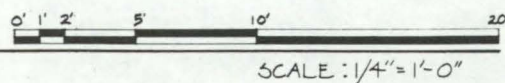
Wooden settee located in the hall. Art nouveau-style, the seat pad is pink, green, and white and there is a storage compartment under the seat. LCHS photo.

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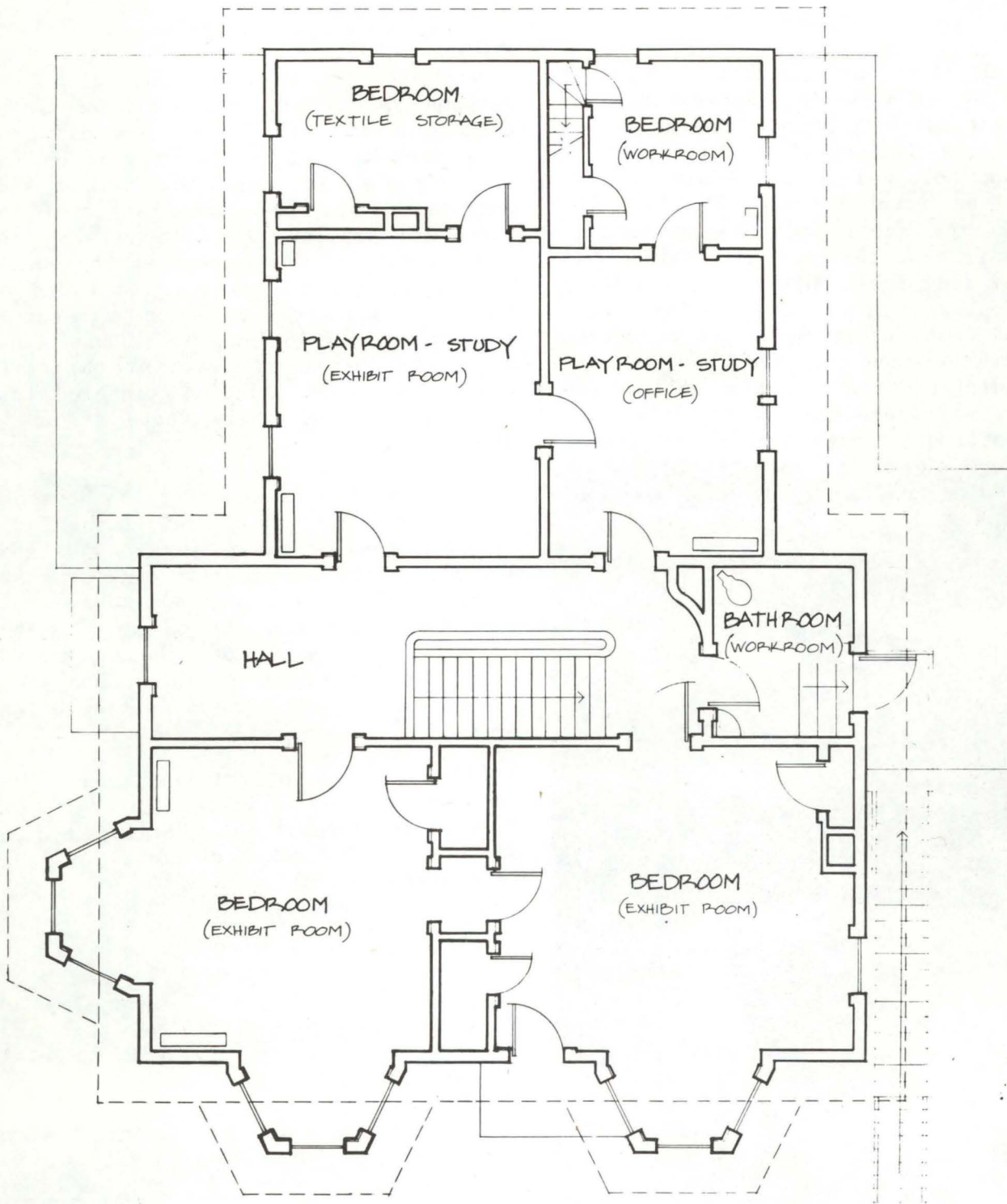




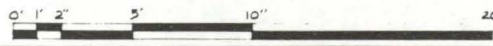
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Labels refer to original use of the rooms. Parentheses are around present day labels. Plans courtesy W. B. McCroskey. Labels by Ray Ellen Moore.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



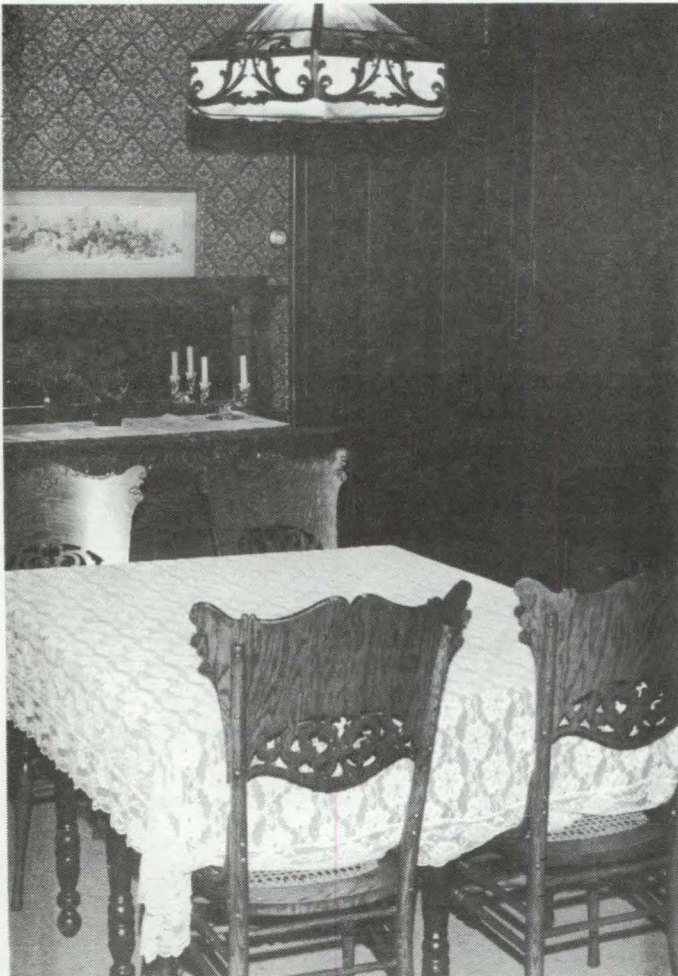
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



Labels refer to original use of the rooms. Parentheses are around present day labels. Plans courtesy W. B. McCroskey. Labels by Ray Ellen Moore.

tricate one now, but the elegance is comparable. If one looks closely at the

south wall just above the picture molding, the old border paper is visible under the subsequent coats of paint. The green and yellow glass Tiffany-like chandelier in this room belonged to the Adair family. It provides a subtle and soft light focused on the table for elegant dining. It is said that the McConnell family had a dining room table that would seat sixteen people in this room. Obviously, they had less furniture in the room than is there now and what they had was arranged differently. In the cabinet on the west wall, one can see the McConnell place setting through the glass doors.



Dining room showing table, oak chairs, and buffet finished to match. Tiffany-like yellow and green glass lamp with brass trim belonged to the Adairs. LCHS photo.

It included a small crescent-shaped dish for bones which was placed to the immediate upper left of the dinner plate.

Between the "company door" and the dining room is a door that now leads out to a large porch. Originally this porch was considered a side porch and this a side entrance. When the house was new the porch was smaller, being even with the front exterior of the rest of the house. Dr. Church had the extra area added so that he could sit outside on warm summer evenings with friends. Mr. McConnell had a small conservatory built at the north end of the porch which was entered from the maid's room, where there is now a window.

It is said that the cost of the house, a shed in the back yard, refurbishing the well and some of the furniture was about \$60,000. This was a great deal of money in 1886 and one can only speculate about the reasons for this large sum. In 1896 when the McConnells lost the house, the value was placed at \$5,000. This is a severe loss of value, even during a time of financial depression.

Today, the value of this reminder of the past cannot be estimated in terms of money. It represents our heritage and our history and is truly priceless for these reasons.*

FOOTNOTES

¹Gladys Anthony Johnson, "John Jay Anthony," Quarterly Bulletin of the Latah County Historical Society, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter, 1979.

²The following books are recommended for information on Victorian styling: (1) John J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture, A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1977) and (2) Carol Olwell and Judith Lynch Waldhorn, A Gift to the Street (San Francisco: Antelope Press, 1976) for information about exterior elements of style. William Seale, Recreat-

ing the Historic House Interior (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1979) for a discussion of interior styling.

³William Seale, Recreating the Historic House Interior (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), p. 97.

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DERNHAM & KAUFMANN AND WEBER

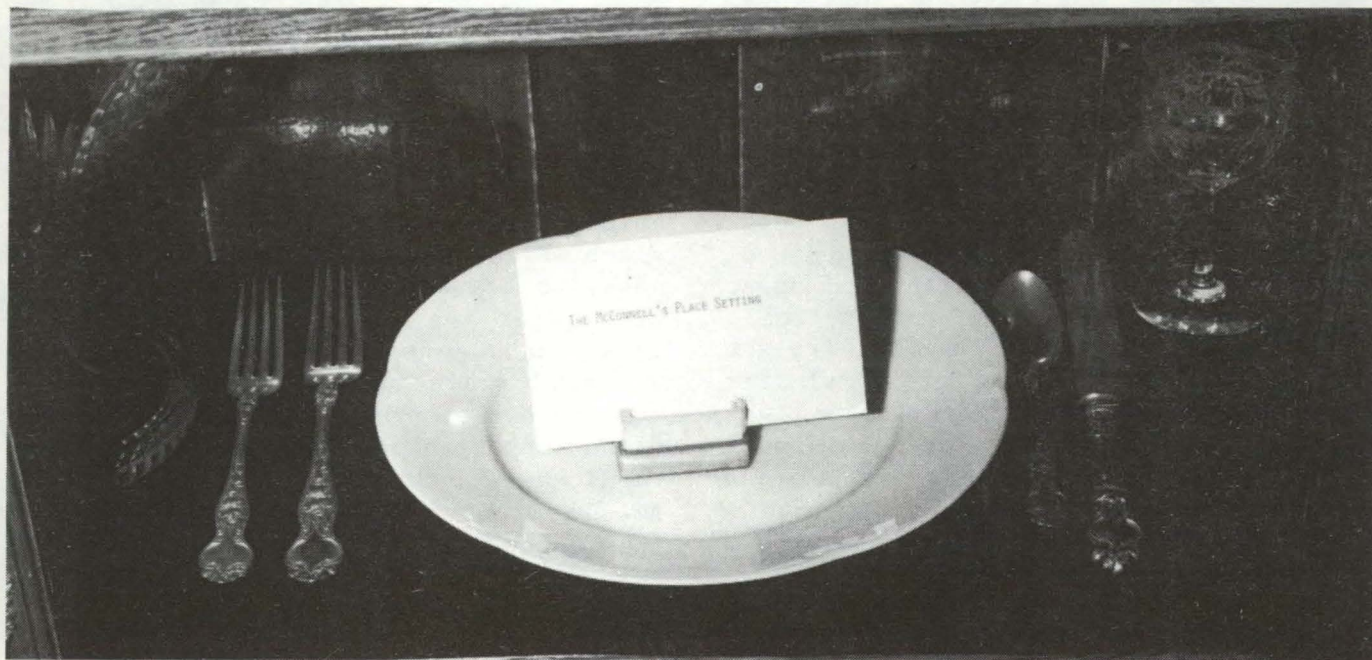
These enterprising go-ahead young men have seen proper to put into circulation a petition to establish better road facilities and make bridges over the country between Moscow and American Ridge. D & K head this list with \$200 and Weber follows with \$100. This is a much needed work and its accomplishment will bring trade to the merchants of Moscow. The people of American Ridge district will certainly remember their benefactors and return favors by aiding those who assist them.

Moscow Mirror
7 May 1886, p. 3

THE RAILROAD.

Every day the indications are more favorable for the railroad to be completed to Moscow. Recently some of the officers came up and took in the situation. Then the subordinate officers rush into town and purchase town lots, next wheat buyers who have the confidence of the company advance the price of grain on the future harvest. Then appears what would appear the final requisite that we agree to pay eight dollars per ton on wheat shipped from Moscow for the next year. To the obstacle by the company that money was wanting to carry on the work, we are informed that a sufficient loan was procured for them and they rejected it saying they did not care to borrow money. After surveying the situation it would appear to a reasoning mind that operations would commence about Aug. 1st, 1885, if they commence at all.

Moscow Mirror
17 July 1885, p. 2



McConnell place setting of bone white heavy china with elaborate sterling silverware and crystal wine glass. LCHS photo.

THE REST OF THE STORY
A BRIEF SKETCH OF MCCONNELL'S BACKGROUND
by Ed Burke

The April 1, 1976, edition of the quarterly publication of the Latah County Historical Society contained an article about William J. McConnell. The first paragraph asked the question, "Where did McConnell come from and how were his leadership qualities developed?" The article then relates McConnell's experience in the Boise Basin and the Vigilante activity that he was associated with. The story is only partly told, therefore I would like to complete the answer to that question and as Paul Harvey, famed radio newscaster would say, "Here is the rest of the story."

William J. McConnell was born to Irish parents in 1829 near Commerce, Michigan. He attended school there and then completed his education at the high school level. At the age of 21 he signed on as a driver of a 6-mule team which pulled a wagon loaded with 3000 lbs. of freight being a part of a train of 10 similar wagons and teams. Their destination was Salt Lake City which was reached without incident and there McConnell met a group of horsemen who were preparing to take a large herd of horses to California. They needed riders to assist in taking the herd through and McConnell was signed on. They proceeded to California, meeting a raiding party of Piate Indians near Virginia City; they escaped without loss and McConnell left the horse drive and spent

some time in Virginia City. He then traveled to Folsom, California, by stagecoach and met another Irishman named Dennis Dugan. They became friends and started a mining operation in the gold fields nearby. McConnell finally accumulated sufficient wealth to permit him to leave the gold mining and search for another means of livelihood. This was the fall of 1860 and the residence laws of California permitted McConnell the right to vote. It was his first time and Abraham Lincoln was his choice.

McConnell heard rumors of the gold strike in southwestern Idaho and decided to investigate the possibilities. He purchased passage on a steamer at San Francisco which was headed for Portland. He chose to travel by "steerage" facilities at \$20 for the trip instead of \$40 for first class. He later admitted that it was no bargain as the closeness, heavy tobacco smoke, profanity, and stench were almost unbearable. The trip to Portland required 54 hours and upon his arrival, he sought out people who had returned from the Idaho gold fields. His information turned out to be disheartening. Miners who went there expecting to make great fortunes came back broke, with stories about the Indian raids on the unprotected miners. McConnell decided to wait. He accepted a job as school teacher in Yam-

hill, Oregon, where he stayed for two years.

In the spring of 1863 he decided to try his luck at the Idaho Gold producing mines. It was early April when he and his friend and partner, John Porter, left Yamhill. They traveled by river steamer to Umatilla Landing and then proceeded by horseback and pack train over the Blue Mountains to the Idaho Territory. They located at a small community named Jerusalem on the Payette River near Horseshoe Bend. They selected land beside a small stream which they named "Porter Creek." Water from the stream was diverted onto their land and they probably were one of the first in Idaho to irrigate their farm. McConnell's plan was to raise fruit and vegetables and sell them to the miners. This proved to be a lucrative venture and was eventually disrupted by the intense activity of horse thieves in the Payette Valley. McConnell's ranch was a target for their sneaky raids as McConnell had the reputation of having exceptionally fine animals. Finally as the situation had deteriorated to the extent that the farmers and townspeople decided to take action on their own, the Vigilante Committee was formed and McConnell was elected captain.

Now my story shifts to a later date. McConnell received notice from Judge Brown in Boise City that he had been appointed Deputy U.S. Marshall. He accepted the job willingly, believing that he would be in a much better position to take action, with authority of the U.S. Government backing him. He had no sooner left the vigilantes when, without his knowledge, they picked up Sheriff Updyke and his assistant and hanged them. The bodies were left on display, hanging from the execution trees, with placards attached warning all other outlaws to beware. The results were magical as the message was loud and clear. Some left on foot, some on horseback, and some were lucky to get accomodation on the stage coaches. There was a great feeling of relief among the

remaining residents and McConnell and his assistant found that their work was only to "mop up" the stragglers. He resigned his commission in late summer of 1865 and left Idaho to return to Yamhill, Oregon.



William J. McConnell in middle-age. LCHS photo.

* *

A young lady, Louisa Brown, had won this young man's heart and they were married. They left on their honeymoon trip immediately, traveling to northern California where McConnell was to purchase land and start raising beef cattle. There was a gold strike in this area and once again, McConnell's plan to sell to the miners was a lucrative venture.

In 1871 he sold his ranch and left with his family which now included a son, William J., Jr. They returned to Yamhill,

Oregon. McConnell purchased a home for his family and a general merchandise store which provided support for his family. He invested money he had gained from his Idaho and California ventures into real estate locally. His interest in schools earned him a position on the School Committee which he served for several years.

In 1878 he was elected to the State Senate representing Yamhill County. The final year of his second term, he was elected president of the Senate. He directed them through a heated session. McConnell had a way of getting people to work together. His opponents respected him because they knew that he was fair in all the legislation that he directed. He was offered the candidacy of Governor for the 1878 elections on the Republican ticket. He refused as he had already made plans to leave for Moscow, Idaho, and the Palouse

* * *

A WIFE'S COMMANDMENTS.

1. Thou shalt not have any other wife but me, nor shalt thou, in thy sleep, dream of other women.
2. Thou shalt not take unto thy house any beautiful or brazen image of a servant girl to make love to when my back is turned, for I am a jealous wife.
3. Honor thy wife's father and mother, and wear a smile when thou meetest them.
4. Thou shalt not be behind thy neighbors, but outshine them in dressing thy wife and babies.
5. Thou shalt let thy wife have the last word in every row.
6. Thou shalt not get drunk or go to bed with thy boots on.
7. Thou shalt not say nice words to other women in my presence, nor praise them in our privacy.
8. Remember I am a jealous wife.
9. Thou shalt not stay out after nine o'clock at night, nor snore at my side, or kick in thy sleep.
10. Remember thou benedict these commandments and keep them holy, for they are gospel.

Moscow Mirror
4 October 1889, p. 1

country. He had envisioned this as becoming a great agricultural area and he wanted to be a part of its development. He built a large department store which at the time was the only one of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. He also built a fine home for his family. In 1890 he served on the State Constitutional Convention Committee and was elected U.S. Senator for what is now called the "Lame Duck" session. He became famous for his endeavor in promoting the "Free Coinage of Silver" legislation. Then in 1892 he was elected Idaho's second governor. The Boise Statesman newspaper article summarized McConnell very well, "McConnell comes to Boise as Governor with a formidable background."

Now you have the rest of the story.*

* * *

THAT MANURE PILE.

The undersigned ladies return our thanks to Jones & Holt for their kindness in removing the manure pile from Third street and putting down a carpet on the same with sheepskin boarder.

1. Mrs. Stockenfeat
2. Miss Talkumheep
3. Miss Mudywader
4. Mrs. Holinstocken
5. Mrs. Pigeontoe
6. Mrs. Toeinwalker
7. Miss Holloifooter
8. Mrs. Instepdiger
9. Miss Antirugine
10. Mrs. Oldgreyhorse
11. Mrs. President

Moscow Mirror
31 July 1885, p. 3

We trust that the ladies will be patient and not bear down too hard but give Jones & Holt an opportunity to remove the manure pile from Third St., which they promise to do, and at the same time read their new ad in another column and go round the north way for meat until the manure is removed.

Moscow Mirror
24 July 1885, p. 3

AN EXCERPT FROM "THE IDAHO INFERNO"

by W. J. McConnell

Editor's note: William J. McConnell recounts two episodes from his days as a vigilante in the Boise area. This excerpt from McConnell's unpublished writings provides an interesting glimpse of Idaho's "Wild West" as interpreted by one of Latah County's most illustrious and fearless early citizens.

The spelling, punctuation, and grammar are rendered exactly as originally penned by McConnell.

The original manuscript is now at the Bancroft Library at Berkeley, California, and they have given their permission for this publication. A microfilm of the original manuscript is available for reading at the Historical Society.

* * *

We will commence with Idaho in that part which is connected with the Boise Mines.

They were discovered in the Fall of 1862 by a party of prospectors, of which Mr. Grimes was one of the leaders and while prospecting what is known as Boise Basin. The party was attacked by Indians and Mr. Grimes killed on a creek which still retains his name.

Part of the original prospecting party went out to obtain supplies and publish the news of the discovery.

It attracted during that Fall and early winter quite a number of Miners, and prospectors. During the Winter the tale of the almost fabulous discoveries made there obtained wide circulation, and in the early Spring of 1863 a large immigration poured into that district, the town of Placerville was established, the town of Raunock, now known as Idaho City, the town of Hogem, since been named Pioneer City, and Centerville.

Idaho City within one year from the first discovery of the mines, obtained a population of at least 5000 inhabitants, composed of Miners, Merchants, Lawyers, Doctors, and adventurers from all parts of

the inhabitable globe, and it was, as it were, a revival of the early days of California. All the renegades in the old California camps and British Columbia, New Mexico and Montana found refuge among the congenial spirits congregated there. Numerous gaming houses were opened around the tables of which hundreds of men congregated nightly, motly assemblages of Spaniards, Italians, Cow Boys, and despirdoes from all parts of the world: each man seemed to carry his life in his own belt, and in lack of a daily paper or any regular mail facilities with the outside world, the waiters in the restaurants were wont to announce the number of men they had for breakfast on that particular morning.

Upon the roads leading to these mines were established what were termed stations, places where what was in those days known as Vest pocket whisky was served out at the very moderate price of two bits a drink; where meals were served consisting of rusty bacon, beans and sour dough bread, perhaps as a luxury for desert, dried apples, at the moderate price of one dollar and a quarter. A bed was furnished to the weary traveler consisting of a couple of pair of Blankets spread on the floor, allowing the occupant to economize

his boots as a pillow for the moderate price of one dollar a night.

These stations almost invariably formed a rendezvous for numerous horse thieves and road agents, as they were termed, which infested the country. Lucky indeed was the traveler who was fortunate enough to reach his objective point without contribution in some form or another having been levied upon him.

Numerous horse ranches, as they were termed were opened upon the valleys of the Payette and Boise Rivers with agencies in the towns within the Basin. The miners upon reaching their destination usually sent out the saddle animals which they rode, and the pack animals on which they conveyed their camp equipage to these horse ranches.

They were usually run in the interest of some band of thieves and if a good horse was turned over to these faithful guardians, it was a very rare exception if the owner ever recovered it - the report made upon application for his return usually being, your horse it took sick and died, or was stolen at such a time.

The haste to obtain a possession of mines or lucrative employment of some kind, together with the heavy expense attending upon pursuit of stolen property gave those who followed these illegitimate pursuits, an opportunity of evading justice.

Things went along in this manner without scarcely anyone pretending to claim protection of the law for a year or 18 months from the first discovery of these mines. Talks were frequent concerning organization of vigilant committees or resort to mob law, but nothing definite was done until the Fall of 1864 when W. J. McConnell having a garden on the Payette River about four miles above the Horse Shoe Bend while in pursuit of a horse which had been stolen from his train near Centerville, discovered one in a stable in Boise City which had been stolen about three months prior. He asked the proprietor who put the horse there, and was informed that one

Gilke, a restaurant keeper was the owner of the horse.

Mr. McConnell then repaired to Gilkes' place of business and asked him of whom he got the horse, and was informed that one John Kelly, a former famous violinist of California made him a present of the horse.

Mr. Kelly happened to come along at the time. Mr. McConnell asked him of whom he got the horse. Mr. Kelly refused to inform him; McConnell told him that his reason for wishing to know was that the horse was stolen from him three months before, and the man of whom he (Kelly) got the horse, was perhaps the thief.

There was a class of men in that country of which Mr. Kelly seemed to have a great admiration; who termed themselves "chiefs": men who prided themselves upon being fighting men, and who took great pleasure in having their friends relate the number of men they had killed. Mr. Kelly spoke up and says, you wouldn't tell him so, meaning the man of whom he got the horse.

Mr. McConnell says, the hell I wouldn't, show me the son of a gun. I wouldn't tell him he was a thief if I thought he was.

The man was perhaps within the room then as the room was probably full of desperadoes, and a commotion at once ensued.

Mr. McConnell was accompanied by his brother, and according to the custom, both were heavily armed. A conflict was imminent, but by the interference of the officers, prevented.

Mr. McConnell was informed then that the only manner in which he could obtain his horse, was to sue out an attachment and proceeded at once to get counsel to get out the necessary papers.

The Justice of the Peace informed him that a bond insuring the payment of the costs would not be sufficient; it would be necessary for him to pay for the issuance and service of papers in advance, which he did.

Mr. A. G. Cook appeared as counsel and as it was evident to everyone the horse was his property he had no trouble in substantiating his claim and got possession of his property, the cost amounting to \$70, to obtain possession of his own property, the value of which was perhaps \$50. Forebearance having in the opinion of Mr. McConnell ceased to be a virtue, he led his recovered property in front of the stable where were seated a dozen or fifteen followers of the road, dressed many of them in buckskin suits, sporting ivory handled revolvers and enjoying the discomfiture of what they termed, the vegetable men.

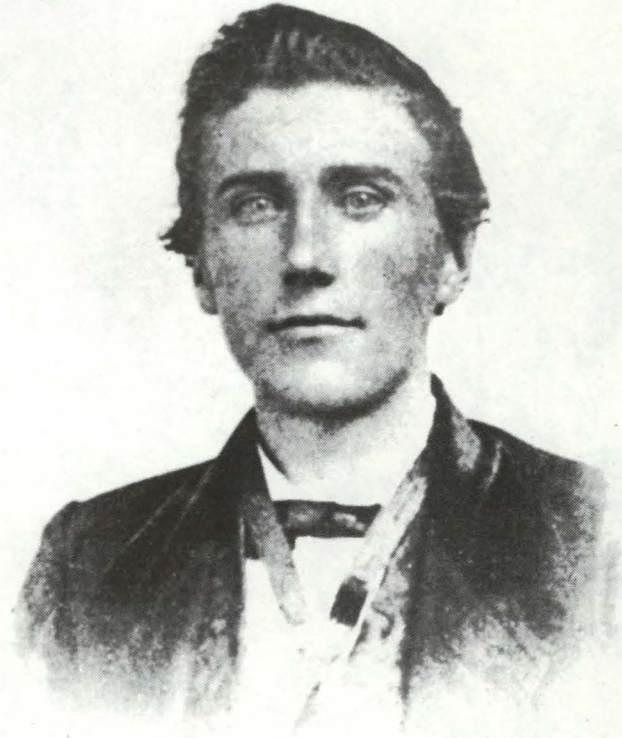
Mr. McConnell says, Gentlemen, I want to make a little speech to you people before I say good bye. One of the boys says, Fire in stranger, He says, I am one who is big enough fool not to recognize any chiefs I can catch any damn horse thief who ever marked these prairies, and the next one who steals a horse from me is my injun; there will be no lawsuit about it. No one took any exception to these remarks as they evidently did not understand how big a crank Mr. McConnell was, and they didn't like the looks of the weapons he carried, but they determined to learn him, as they called it, to take a joke, but a few days had elapsed before they raided his ranch and captured several of his horses, together with some of his neighbors, making in all nine head including four mules, all valued at perhaps, \$2000.

Mr. McConnell meant what he said. It became a question with him whether he should abandon his business, which was a very lucrative one, or make an example which would deter others from further molesting him.

He at once instituted a search, and after five days diligently employed, he ascertained that the thieves had taken what was known as the Brown Lee trail, and started for what was called the lower country, meaning Oregon and Washington Territory. He secured a couple of neighboring ranch men or gardeners, to accom-

pany him in the perilous pursuit of men who were liable to ambuscade them in the long and lonely trail of perhaps 250 miles, which they were destined to follow.

This was in Oct. 1864. After one of the hardest rides which was perhaps ever made on the Pacific Coast, they came upon the

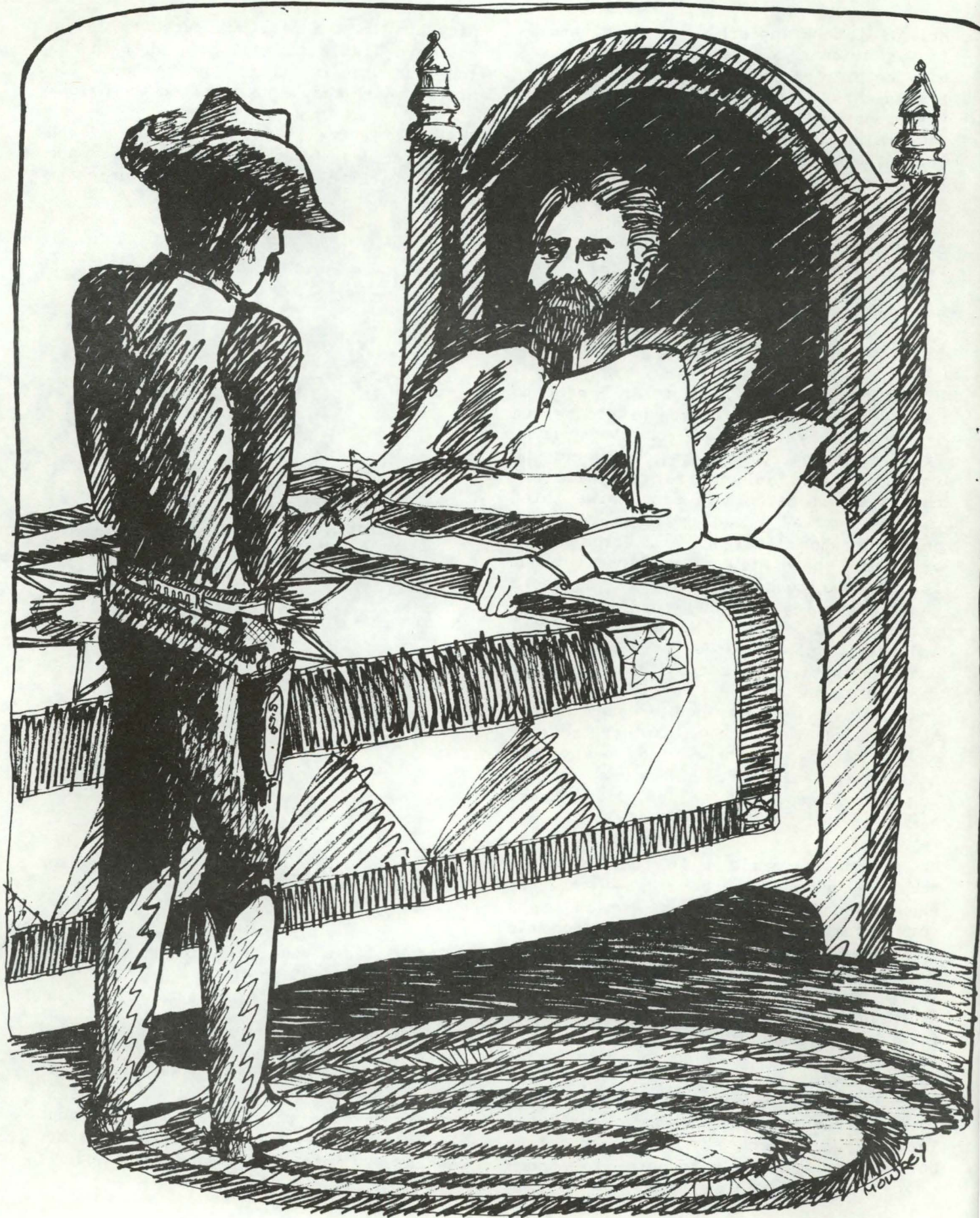


*W. D. McConnell
Captain of Vigilantes
1864*

McConnell as a young man during his vigilante days. LCHS photo.

* *

camp, in which were four men and recovered their horses after a short and decisive conflict in which no prisinors were taken, quarter neither being asked or given: Summary justice was meted to all except the leader who was absent from camp, search was instituted for him, and it



was learned that he had gone to Legrande to purchase supplies for his party with, the intention of going on that night over the Blue Mountains to Walla Walla.

Pursuit was at once made, and upon arrival in Legrande he was found to have fallen into the clutches of the Sheriff upon complaint of a Jewish Merchant to whom he had paid a lot of bogus gold dust in settlement of supplies purchased.

The slow process of illy organized courts of justice, together with Mr. McConnell formed experience of frontier law not meeting with his approval, he at once went to the Sheriff and told him that he had followed the man then in his custody, a great distance under arrest, and was determined to have him dead or alive.

That he respected his duty as an officer and didn't wish to compromise him in any way, and was aware that the courts were powerless to punish such people for offences which were condoned by a large portion of the population, and all he asked was, that the prisoner should be given immediate hearing and discharged, that he would be responsible for him not passing any more bogus dust in that country.

The Sheriff told him that the Justice of the Peace was sick and unable to give the man a hearing: that he would have to hold him until the Justice was able to get out of bed. Mr. McConnell asked where the Justice resided and was shown his house on the hill at the upper edge of the town. He at once repaired to his residence and told the Justice he had learned from the Sheriff of his inability to get up and give the man who was under arrest for passing bogus dust, a hearing and that he had come up to volunteer his services, and told the Justice it would not be necessary for him to get out of bed, that he (McConnell) would make his Docket entries, and assist him in every manner possible, and that there would be no evidence against the prisoner, and that he would doubtless be acquitted at once; that he was no pursuit of him, and anxious to start on his return; the Justice told

Mr. McConnell that being the case, to inform the Sheriff that he might bring the prisoner to his room.

Mr. McConnell then returned and hunted the Sheriff up, told him the arrangement that was made, and asked him if he had a deputy, and was informed that he had not. Mr. McConnell told him that he had no warrant to arrest the man, but was determined to take him, and it might lead to a conflict with the roughs, of which there were a large number already in town, and if he had any business in the country, it would be a good time to attend to it so as not to get mixed up in the matter; if he would appoint some man as a deputy to take the prisoner up, he would protect the deputy and see that the office was not abused.

The Sheriff said he had a farm in the country that he was anxious to see, and at once made arrangements to go to it. The man who was deputised for the purpose, took the prisoner up to the Justice's house and arrangements having been made for the prosecuting witness not to appear, the prisoner was at once discharged.

Mr. McConnell had but one man with him in town the other the other having been slightly disabled in the little unpleasantness consequent upon the recovery of the horses, had been detailed to take care of them while McConnell and the other man went after the leader of the party. Before starting up to the Justice's house, McConnell sent the man who was with him, up to the Livery Stable where their saddle horses were kept, and told him to secure another saddle horse from the stable keeper; one Thomas Cottle who is now a resident of Portland, Oregon to mount the prisoner if he succeeded in taking him, of which he had no doubt, and told his man to have his (McConnell's) double barrel shot gun just within the door where he could lay his hands upon it the moment he entered the barn, to have the three horses saddled ready for an immediate mount, as he would take the chances of going up to the Justice's office and making the arrest alone.

They thought the friends of the horse thief would not attempt to rescue him until they were about to leave the town with him. Everything worked satisfactorily. Upon the man coming out of the Justice's house surrounded by a little party of congenial friends, McConnell came up and said to him.

These people appear to have no further use for you, and I am anxious to have you accompany me, you will please come at once. This was a surprise as such a thing seemed to be entirely unexpected, and the man at first refused to go and asked by what authority, McConnell told him that in due time he would learn the particulars; that they had been foolishness enough, and took him by the shoulder and marched him up the street, making his friends remain at a respectful distance.

About the time he reached the barn quite a crowd had assembled and upon entering the door he at once turned the prisoner over to his comrad, telling him to mount him at once and siezing his double barrel shot gun, and cocking both barrels, told the crowd to stand back as he recognized no one and was determined at all hazards to take his prisoner and one interfering will suffer the consequence. All this passed so rapidly that before any time was given to organize a rescue they were mounted and off. Another long and tedious ride, a trial in which a plea of not guilty would have been a farce, a confession which placed the names of the entire band in the possession of Mr. McConnell and his party, a conviction and punishment which was usually meted out in such cases quickly followed.

When McConnell's party started in pursuit of these men it was publicly boasted by the friends of the Horse thieves that McConnell would never make any more trouble on the Payette as it was fully expected he would be killed on coming up with the party. Their personal friends tried to desuade them from going saying it were better to let the horses go.

After an absence of about two weeks they

made their appearance in the lower Valley of the Payette on the regularly travelled stage line, horses jaded and mules tender-footed but fully determined to wage war unto the bitter end upon all horse thieves and highwaymen.

Having from a confession of one of the robbers mortally wounded in the mêlée, learned the entire organization and having the names of the members and points which they occupied in the different valleys he stopped in his progres of 50 miles through the valley before reaching home and proclaimed war to the knifa and announced that he was prepared to follow and recover any stolen stock and only asked that he might be notified of any such case.

Upon his return home it became the general talk through the neighborhood and a party of his neighbors upon the following Sunday came to his house and requested the privilege of sharing the experise incurred in the recent pursuit and asked to join with him in a compact for future protection, and there and then was made an agreement that they would allow no further depredations to go unpunished.

Payette River rises in the Payette and Salmon River Mountains - at interval the hills widen out into valleys of greater or less extent. From its confluence with the Snake River there is quite an extensive valley extending 25 o 30 miles up the river where it cañons for a distance of 4 or 5 miles to what is known as Burner's Ranch and then cañons again for a distance of 5 or 6 miles where it widens out into another valley of seven or eight miles in length above what is known as Horse Shoe Bend, in which valley was located the Ranches and gardens of some eight or ten of the pioneer settlers who entered into this compact for mutual protection they being the entire population of this little valley. It having become noised abroad that they had effected this compact, the citizens of the lower or larger valley held a meeting for the purpose of effecting an organization of like import and at their first or pre-

liminary meeting they dicussed the advisability and appointed a committee to go up the River and wait where Mr. McConnell and his friends to ask them to come down and join with them in effecting a permanent organization.

Mr. McConnell and L. C. Berry now of Humboldt County California were appointed as a committee to go down and confer with the citizens of the lower Payette Valley and unit with them in effecting an organization.

The meeting was to be held at what was known as the Block House about 15 miles below Burner's Ranch a two story house composed of hewn logs, the upper story of which never having been partitioned, formed a room sufficiently large to accomodate the meeting. Upon the night appointed Mr. McConnell and his friends

arrived at the appointed rendezvous and found about 50 or 60 men as motly a crowd as could be immagined and they seemed to expect him to take the lead and call the meeting to order which he did.

They then proceeded to effect an organization by ellecting a president, secretary and treasurer. The duty of the President was to call the meeting whenever it was deemed necessary, to take notice of all complaints and appoint from the organization those whom he deemed the most efficient to pursue and capture any party or parties whom it was thought advisable to arrest & punish. The duty of the Secretary was to keep a record of the proceedings of all the meetings and draw warrants upon the Treasurer for claims which were properly audited. The Treasurer was to receive all moneys and account for the same. The name of the organization was to be promulgated to the world as the "Payette Vigilance Committe or Committe of Safety."

Its object was to rid the country of Horsethieves, bogus dust operators and highwaymen or, as the latter were familiarly termed in that country Road Agents.

In this assemblage of men were many good

citizens, men whose every look and act betokened their earnestness trying to bring about a more agreeable and pleasant state of affairs for those whose lot it was to pass through this then sparcelly settled country while there were others who were there in an effort to join in the cry of "stop thief!" and thereby shield themselves from the punishment which their deeds justly merited.

One of these latter individuals as soon as the opportunity arrived, arose and moved that one Dr. Burgess be declared to be President of the organization, which motion prevailed.

Dr. Burgass was a man above the average hight with great suavity of manner, full dark beard and a restless searching eye. His appearance was not such as to inspire confidence in one accustomed to read physiognomy but no body ventured to object to his election, all seemed willing to give him a trial and abide the result.

Various resolutions were introduced many of which were of such a nature as would have rendered it impossible to bring to justice any one no matter what their acts might have been, and, take the meeting as a whole it was evident to Mr. McConnell that he was being associated with many men who were no better than the worst criminals on the roads.

However something had to be done as the men congegated there were nearly all strangers to one another each waited for the future to develope what it might. It was resolved that three modes of punishment only could be inflicted, conviction could only be had upon a trial before a jury composed of seven members of the organization. Each jury should be drawn by the members by lot. If a prisoner was convicted the punishments were. First, notice to quit the country within 24 hours second = a horse whipping = third, hanging.

After organization had been effected complaint was at once made against a man named Dave Conklin for passing bogus dust

and it was resolved to serve a notice upon him giving him 24 hours to leave the country.

Mr. McConnell was deputized to serve this notice and a posse of three of the members selected to accompany him on the mission. Mr. Conklin lived at a place known as the Picket Corral about five miles above the Block house. The posse was to meet Mr. McConnell at Flournoy's about half way between the two points at 12^m the next day.

Picket Corral was a noted rendezvous for desperate characters, some of whom were members of the regularly organized gang, a portion of which had been recently followed by McConnells party, and they knowing he was present at the meeting in the Block House had come down to Flournoys to intercept him on his way home, for the purpose, it is supposed, of reeking out vengeance for the friends lost in the recent encounter. After adjournment of

the meeting Mr. McConnell went to Flournoy's and put up there for the night or rather remainder of the night. as it was then two o'clock in the morning, with the intention of remaining there until his friends arrived the following day to go with him to the Picket Corral but when he arose in the morning he found it probable that they would be saved the trip up their as the Picket Corral crowd, with the exception of one, had come prior to his arrival at Flournoys and were there in the morning all armed to the teeth.

It was a cold, drizzly, wintery morning with two or three inches of sleet and ice upon the frozen ground. The house consisted of three rooms one general sitting room and smoking room, a diningroom which served as a kitchen as well, and a general sleeping room, only one half window served to brighten the dreariness of the sitting-room with its earthen fireplace & each floor.

Mr. McConnell took in the situation at a glance. He realized that those men were there waiting for him and that as soon as their plans were perfected startling de-

velopments would be made. He got in a corner of the room where he could not be attacked from the rear, secured an old magazine and while apparently deeply interested in its contents watched the movements of those in the room.

The Flournois family consisted of an old man from Missouri, his wife, and old lady, two beautiful and accomplished daughters grown and one younger daughter of perhaps twelve years. They were people who had been used to better times but owing to the rebellion was then raging and complicity of the old man with the rebels he had sought a more congenial climate and come out west to seek reparation for his shattered fortune.

Owing to the fact of the old man being a rebel and the further fact perhaps of the girls being pretty these gentlemen of the road did not wish to enact a scene of bloodshed wherein four or five men were to attack one in the presence of this family. About ten o'clock in the morning

the absent member of the Picket Corral crew put in an appearance. He was a man of about 5 feet and ten inches in height, with dark curly hair, thick neck, and bull dog expression of countenance. He was a man of good frame and weighed about 200 pounds.

Stepping into the room from the light without, he did not at once discover the presence of Mr. McConnell, one of his comrades plucked his coat and pointed a finger to where McConnell was sitting. then began a whispered conversation in the opposite corner and directly the leader rose and called Mr. McConnell outside.

Their plans seemed to have been perfected which was to invite him out to the Corral where horses were stabled, a structure composed of posts firmly set in the ground distant some 60 or 100 feet from the house. Mr. McConnell got up hitched his weapons well to the front, and knowing the critical moment had arrived a moment which was to determine whether he should ever leave that spot alive or not, and with an assumed air of careless indiffer-

ence, a smile which ill betokened that which was going on within, he walked with the men who called him out to the Corral followed by the others.

As soon as he stepped within the inclosure he was in the position they sought to get him, out of sight of the family. But, a change quickly passed over his countenance. Turning promptly with his back in a corner, he grasped with one hand his navy six shooter and said. = Gentlemen I am no emigrant. Show your hands or I will make the biggest funeral ever in the Payette.

The man who had last arrived and was apparently the leader replied= I understand you are one of the men who went below after Weatherlys party, "yes" replied Mr. McConnel. "I am" I understand moreover that he gave you a message for me" said the other "yes, your name is Wakefield I believe replied McConnell recognizing the man from a description given by the wounded outlaw in the LeGrande affair. The man acknowledged the name of Wakefield and Mr. McConnell continued = yes [this is a blank in the transcript] sent a request

through me that you send a certain ring of his in your possession to his younger brother, there is the ring on your hand now, if you wish to send him the ring I can give you the address. Wakefield and his friends were utterly dumbfounded at the impudence of the man before them in thus boldly admitting under the circumstances his connection with the killing of one of their comrades.

"The s o b!" exclaimed Wakefield, "to go back on his friends." "Gentlemen" interposed Mr. McConnell, I came to this country in the Spring of 1862 in company with my partner from the Dalls in Oregon. We brought six pack animals laden with garden utensils and sufficient provisions to last us until we could raise something to sell. From then until now this valley has been occupied by no less than four ranches who support from two six men apiece who do nothing but steal. If you fellows had left me alone I probably would have left you alone, but, you got to lazy

to go away from your own homes to steal, and took a fancy to my horses and robbed me of them, now I want you to take notice that forbearance has ceased to be a virtue and it is now war to the bitter end.

I know why you have met me here what your purposes are, you have witnesses here to swear that I drew my weapons first, you intended when you came here to shoot me down like a dog, and the friends of Mr. Wakefield here would be willing to go into court and swear that you shot me in self-defense, but, gentlemen, I don't know whether or not, you might get away with me, five to one is big odds but I don't know, but I can whip five to one of you, just start it and we will try it. "We have perfected an organization" he continued, some of your friends were present when it was done, last night, we do not propose to hang a man because somebody says he is a scoundrel. We will give every man a fair trial, and if he is convicted we have three modes of punishment, as you are well aware we cannot keep prisoners. Punishment counts in administering a horsewhipping, giving twenty four hours notice to leave the country & hanging.

The time having nearly arrived for Mr. McConnell posse to appear and preferring not to stand all day in the corner of a corral he concluded to at once serve the notice which he had been authorized to, and get away as quickly as possible. Mr. McConnell therefore spoke out to Mr. Conklin who was present, and told him that he had been deputised to serve a notice on him, Conklin refused to have anything to do with him.

Well I will read it anyway said Mr. McConnell and proceeded to do so. Conklin swore he never had passed more than three dollars and a half in bogus dust in his life and had friends enough to stand by him, and protect him, that he would not leave the country.

While in the hight of this excitement Mr. McConnells band hove in sight coming around a bend in the road some 4 or 5 hun-

dred yards distant. As these men had stepped out side the corral followed by McConnell they were plainly in view of the posse, th horsemen thinking their leader was about to be murdered put spurs to their horses and galloped down with double barrelled shotguns in front of them.

It was a startling sight and the Corral gang thought the day of judgement had come.

The riders drew rein and halted in line

ready for action. Mr. McConnell announced that he had served the notice and having no further business there got his horse and road away. Thus ended the first formally served notice.

A posse of the Vigilance Committe went up at the expiration of 24 hours to see if Mr. Conklin had taken exit, and if not to help him make arrangements. They found he had gone and has never since put in an appearance there.*



Original drawing by Liz Mowrey.

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In 1968 interested individuals organized the Latah County Historical Society to collect and preserve materials connected with the history of Latah County and to provide further knowledge of the history and tradition of the area. Every person, young or old, who is interested in the history of Latah County and who would like to assist in its preservation and interpretation is cordially invited to become a member. Subscription to this journal and a discount on books published by the Society are included in membership dues. Dues for the various classes of membership are as follows:

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A "500 Club" is reserved for contributions of \$500 or more. Privileges are identical for all classes; the higher dues represent a much needed donation to help the Society's work. Dues are tax-deductible.

The Society's services include conducting oral histories, publishing local history monographs, maintaining a local history/genealogy research library and the county museum, as well as educational outreach. The Society wishes to acquire objects, documents, books, photographs, diaries, and other materials relating to the history of Latah County. These are added to the collections and made available to researchers while they are preserved for future generations.

The Society is housed in the William J. McConnell Mansion, 110 South Adams, Moscow. The museum is open from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Visits to the museum or research library are welcomed at other times and can be arranged by calling (208) 882-1004.