

# LATAH LEGACY

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*"Shave and a hair cut six bits!"* Clarence Johnson, shown above, opens his first barbershop in Troy in 1931 at the age of 19. Note the accordion on the bench. Hair cuts were then 50 cents but dropped to 35 cents when the Great Depression hit. The Johnson family was one of the many Norwegian families that settled in Troy early in the century. Clarence still operates his barbershop, now on Main Street in Moscow.

## Idaho Centennial Edition

*Inside this issue:*

**An 8-Page Picture Section Spanning  
a Century**

**An Historic Examination of the  
Ethnic Mix of the Early Settlers**

**Diary of a Settler**

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Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring 1990

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## The Images of Latah County

By Mary E. Reed

This is a land of contrasts and a history that encompasses a full range of human activity: mining, logging, agriculture, trade, and education. Its history is one of rich natural resources with bunchgrass-covered prairies in the south, canyons and warm, fertile lands in the southeast, and minerals and forests in the northeast. It is a place of striking beauty and human endeavor. Although Latah County was away from main routes of discovery and travel by white explorers, it was an important area for Native Americans. Nez Perce people camped during the spring on their way to the mountains for fishing and hunting. On the meadows they gathered fruits, vegetables and roots, especially the bulb-like camas root which they ate fresh, dried, or cooked in underground pits. Well-known trails passed through Latah County, including the Greater Nez Perce Trail which crossed Paradise Ridge into Paradise Valley. It stretched from the Clearwater River to Spokane Falls and Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Another trail from Lewiston crossed it about 20 miles from the intersection of the Troy highway, east on Mountain View Road. Isaac Stevens followed the Lewiston trail into Latah County during his 1855 survey of possible routes for a transcontinental railroad route. His was the first description of Latah County by a white man. On June 20, from his camp at what was later called Stevens' Spring, he wrote in his diary, ". . . We have been astonished today at the luxuiance of the grass and the richness of the soil. The whole view presents to the eye a vast bed of flowers in all their varied beauty. The country is a rolling tableland." To the east he noted dense forests on ridges covered with pines ". . . an awesome spectacle of heavy forests."

The first white entrepreneurs in Latah County were miners. In the late

1860s the first miners entered the north-eastern part of the county into the Hoodoo mining district. Most of these miners had worked claims in California, and now they followed new strikes into northern Idaho. Pack trains followed the Hoodoo Trail between Grizzle Camp and the mining claims. Grizzle Camp, at the end of the freight line for the Wells Fargo State Coach from Palouse, Washington, and for the Rawhide Freight Wagon from Walla Walla, was a booming place from 1870 to the late 1880s. At first, the Hoodoo mining area was too isolated from supply centers at Lewiston and Walla Walla to make a day's take of \$20 in gold profitable. Later during the 1880 mining rush, it was reported that a million dollars worth of gold was taken from the Hoodoos. Placer mining and dredges replaced the miner with the gold pan, and opal and

garnet mines were developed. Although mining continues in the Hoodoos, the story has been one of continued hope for a big strike, and eventual disillusionment. While miners panned for gold in the 1870s, others looking for farmland began flooding into the rolling hills of eastern Washington and north central Idaho -- the region known as the Palouse. New farms were a local source of fresh food for the miners, and new villages sprung up near the Hoodoo mountains.

The new homesteaders in northern Latah County had two urgent needs. First, lumber for houses and barns. Second, a way to get supplies in and crops out that was more efficient than the pack trains. Many of the newcomers were Scandinavians who felt at home in the timber. They and others built numerous sawmills scattered throughout the forests of Latah County and began sawing logs into rough cut lumber. The demand greatly exceeded the supply, keeping crews like those at O.K. Olsen's mill busy.

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"The country is a  
rolling tableland"

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Former settlements like Anderson near present day Deary once had four sawmills. Homesteaders on the Palouse prairie also made periodic treks into the woods to get firewood, fence stakes, and poles.

Despite all this activity and commerce, travel was still difficult and slow. Way stations, or half-way houses, were necessary for travelers. The first way station to the Hoodoo mines was Woodfell, first known as the site of the Hoodoo Post Office. It was operated by Jake Johnson who packed groceries over the Hoodoo Trail, raised timothy hay, and served as postmaster. Kennedy Ford was another important stopover for freighters traveling between Walla Walla and the mines, and later it became a site for touring religious camp meetings. Other way stations were at Starner, Princeton, Deep Creek, and Hog Meadows, named for the numerous hogs which fattened on the camas roots. A later station built for travelers between Moscow and the white pine forests was at the Wells lodging house. Joe and Lou Wells were black people who had emigrated from North Carolina in 1889. Joe was also a blacksmith and logger, and he and Lou were highly respected by residents and travelers. His favorite joke was that they were the only white people in the area; the rest were Swedes.

### ***Homesteaders Spurred Growth***

The influx of homesteaders in the 1880s spurred the growth of numerous small communities like Nora. A stopover point between Moscow and Bovill, Nora grew from a sawmill to a town with three sawmills, three churches, a general store and post office, blacksmith and barber shops, saloon, and a large boarding house.

In the north, clearing the land for a "stump ranch" was difficult, back-breaking work. Settlers cleared brush by hand with a grub hoe, cut down small trees, pulled stumps, and burned the larger trees. Even after this work of clearing the land, underground roots had to be axed away. Making a living from timbered land proved difficult, and farm families often had to find other work. Settlers worked on the railroads and at sawmills, hauled logs, cut cord wood, and were hired on harvest crews. The life of

homesteading women was particularly difficult. In addition to raising a family and putting up with the normal hardships of pioneer life, the women were in charge of the farms when the men were away working for wages.

The Latah County forests attracted many Scandinavians, and Troy is still known for its large Swedish and Norwegian population. Swedes like Per Johanson and Ole Bohman encouraged their friends to migrate to Troy, boasting that it took 12 horses to pull Troy carrots out of the ground.

### ***Early Name was 'Huff's Gulch'***

Troy, located on an Indian trail, was originally known as Huff's Gulch, "a dark swampy canyon, so thick with forest growth that birds would scarcely fly through." J. Wesley Seat homesteaded 160 acres and built a sawmill, and by 1890 there were three mills. In 1892, when the town had seven sawmills, it was renamed Vollmer in honor of a German businessman and larger landowner who had helped organize the townsite company. As the agent for the Northern Pacific Railroad, he brought the rails into the community. But in 1897 the citizens rebelled against having their town named for a man whose wealth had been increased by foreclosing on bank loans to farmers. Local legend states that a Greek railroad worker suggested the name Troy and offered a free whiskey to anyone who would vote for naming the town after the "most illustrious city in the world." The new name carried 29 to 9.

Troy thrived as a trading and supply center for homesteaders on the ridges who brought wood, apples, grain, and cord wood into town to sell or barter for supplies. Troy seemed destined to outgrow other towns of its size. The Troy Lumber Company was the largest in the county, operating several small sawmills near Troy. The independent First Bank of Troy gained a reputation as being one of the finest local banks in the country. Under the leadership of men like Ole Bohman and Frank Brocke, the bank played a major role in easing Troy through the Depression.

Entirely different was the town of Bovill, the eastern-most town in Latah County. Around 1890 Francis Warren

homesteaded here, and in 1899 an English gentleman, Lord Hugh Bovill, visited the area, known as Warren Meadows. Lord Hugh Bovill had left England as a young man to work on the family tea plantation in Ceylon. After ranching in Colorado and Nebraska, where he met and married his wife Lady Charlotte, he headed west to find less crowded country. Attracted by the wilderness setting, Bovill purchased the land and cabin in 1901, and he moved his cattle, horses, wife and two daughters to their new home. Although the Bovills operated a ranch, they soon saw another opportunity in the numerous travelers and tourists who came for the superb hunting and fishing. The Bovills extended their home into a hotel famous for its elegant dining and convivial hosts. They also operated a store and the post office. Hotel Bovill was a pleasant overnight stop for those who were traveling to timber homesteads further east.

### ***Shaped Lumber Industry***

While the Bovills' guests were enjoying this Idaho paradise, another landowner appeared that would drive them away. This was the Potlatch Lumber Company. William Deary, Potlatch Company's first general manager, was instrumental in shaping the lumber industry in Latah County. After arriving in Latah County in 1903, Deary bought up vast holdings of white pine land from the state and homesteaders, and he purchased existing mills in Colfax and Palouse City. Convinced that these mills were not adequate for the operation he envisioned, Deary decided to construct a new sawmill and town that the company would own and control. This town was Potlatch and the mill became the largest steam-operated sawmill in the world. The company built another mill at Elk River, and it constructed a railroad, the Washington Idaho and Montana (W.I. & M.) to connect its timber holdings and mills with the Northern Pacific line at Palouse. The plan to push the road into Montana was abandoned as heavy snows in the eastern part of the county shut down logging and the Elk River sawmill much of the winter.

Potlatch logging activities created new towns: Deary, named for the famous Irishman; Helmer, named for the Potlatch Com-

pany's veteran timber cruiser; and Harvard, its name inspired by the neighboring town of Princeton. College students from the east working on the W.I. & M. during the summer, added to the roster by giving station stops the names of Yale, Stanford, Vassar, Cornell, Wellesley, and Purdue. Soon logging camps dotted the forests, and lumberjacks and rough characters blew into towns like Bovill. With dismay the Bovills watched the surrounding countryside being denuded of trees and their town filled with rowdies. They reluctantly sold their land and left in 1911.

A more positive influence on Latah County residents was the Company's town of Potlatch. Potlatch boasted neat rows of workers houses with a separate section for management personnel across town on what became known as Nob Hill. The Company maintained the streets, fire and police services as well as exerted influence over workers' behavior. In order to encourage a stable working force, only married men could occupy individual homes; bachelors lived in boarding houses, often segregated by ethnic origin.

### ***Company Sells Town***

Despite the lack of democracy, Potlatch residents had the advantage of excellent schools, a gymnasium, and the mercantile store which was famous throughout the region for its well-stocked shelves and low prices. In 1952 the Company decided to sell its town, giving residents first choice to purchase their homes. Then in 1981, with the depletion of white pine lumber reserves and an outmoded mill, the Company shut down the mill and had it demolished.

The extreme southeastern edge of the county has an entirely different topography and climate. The highway from Troy to Kendrick and Juliaetta down Brady Gulch follows Little Bear Creek, dropping to an elevation of around 900 feet. Here in the mild climate of the Potlatch River Valley, the Nez Perce lived during the winter months. The Canyon is well-situated with fertile soil, ample water power, and nearby timber. In the early years it was close enough to the mining district to profit as a trading center. Rupert Schupfer, Juliaetta's first homesteader, platted the site for a town

which he called Schupferville. Charles Snyder, who had homesteaded on American Ridge in 1876, bought property next to Schupfer, and built a post office. He named the post office after his two daughters Julia and Etta. In 1890 residents changed the name of Schupferville to Juliaetta.

In the meantime, a quarrel between an early resident of Juliaetta, Thomas Kirby, and the townspeople led to Kirby's moving four miles upstream and founding a new town which he named Latah. Kirby became postmaster and built a handsome house that has become a town landmark. The canyon communities were isolated from the rest of the county. It took two days to carry the mail to Genesee and return; bad weather could mean a trip of three to four days. In the meantime the Northern Pacific was pushing into the Moscow areas. Thomas Kirby began negotiating with the railroad, offering to give the owners half of the townsite in exchange for locating their route through the Potlatch Valley. He also renamed the town Kendrick after the Railroad's chief engineer, James P. Kendrick.

### ***Towns Sought Railroad***

The people of Juliaetta were equally generous, deeding half their townsite to insure that the rails passed through their town. The new route provided service from Genesee and Moscow to Lewiston through the canyon, bypassing the steep grade down the Lewiston Hill. Because the railroad could not immediately obtain permission to build through the Nez Perce reservation, it was not until 1898 that tracks were extended to Lewiston. In the meantime Juliaetta, the southern terminus of the Spokane-Lewiston run, enjoyed the bustle of four daily passenger trains from Spokane.

Abundant water power and a mild climate shaped the history of the two towns. Forty acres of Juliaetta was known as Vineland because of its vineyards, and fields, orchards and gardens produced large crops of wheat, oats, flax, hay, vegetables and fruits, notably tomatoes, watermelons, peaches, pears, and cherries. Kendrick apples won prizes at national fairs, and by 1898 the town had 300 acres of apple orchards and shipped 127 carloads of fruit. In order to transport crops from the upper prairies to

the railroad sidings, Kendrick and Juliaetta constructed tram systems. The Juliaetta tramway had a steam engine that powered sled-like cars along tracks from warehouses on Potlatch Ridge to the railway. In Kendrick, the tramway system used more conventional towers, cables and buckets, with the full buckets of grain providing the gravity feed for the empty ones. With abundant grain harvests of up to 102 bushels for a single acre, and plenty of water power, both communities boasted flour mills. In Juliaetta the Holbrook mill produced the famous "Pride of the Potlatch" brand of flour. Kendrick also had two flour mills, and the Kendrick Rochdale Cooperative Elevator Company built the first concrete silo here. Kendrick also used its water power for a sawmill and an electric power plant.

The Palouse prairie of rolling hills and fertile soil reaches into the southern and western parts of Latah County. When three Lewiston pioneers rode up the Lewiston hill to view the rich upper valley in 1870, the resemblance to the Genesee Valley in New York suggested the name. By 1872 several hundred people had settled the Genesee Valley. In 1875 a trading center was established, and businessmen John Vollmer, Aaron Levi and Jacob Rosenstein established stores and a bank. Rosenstein eventually owned the townsite. Ironically, it was Rosenstein who doomed the first village to oblivion. When the Spokane and Palouse Railway began building into the area, he demanded what was thought to be an exorbitant sum for the right-of-way. Vollmer then bought 40 acres and began building the new Genesee four miles west at the end of the rail line. Defeated, Rosenstein mounted his store on wheels and moved to the new townsite.

### ***Genesee Becomes Trade Center***

Genesee then entered a period of rapid growth, becoming a trade and supply center and a shipping point for a large region. Hay and grain warehouses lined the tracks and main street boasted numerous handsome brick businesses. During harvest season men lined up on benches on Main Street waiting to be hired on the harvest crews. Transient men cooked and slept in jungles near the tracks. A mark of

Genesee's prosperity was the annual Horse and Stock Show. Nez Perce Indians participated in the parade, rodeo and races.

Although Genesee's future seemed assured, it lost out to Moscow located just north in Paradise Valley. Moscow was the successful candidate for seat of the new county created in 1888, and in 1889 it was selected as the site for the new state university. Its population is now only half of what it was during its heyday. Nonetheless, many descendents of the early settlers still live and farm in the valley which is a continuity missing in most other communities.

Paradise Valley extends from the mouth of Paradise Creek in Pullman, Washington, to a ridge west of Moscow Mountain. The Nez Perce who passed through called the valley "Tatkinmah," the place of the young or spotted deer. One of the earliest settlements in Latah County and Idaho was located at the northern edge of Paradise Valley. It was first called Four-Mile after the creek that empties into the Palouse River four miles upstream. After gold was discovered in the Hoodoos in the 1860s, the few pioneers living here sold produce to miners. Asher Palmer who had been in the area in the 1860s when the Mullan Road was being built, returned in 1870 with his family. He operated a stage stop and pack line between Four Mile and Walla Walla, and his sons raised horses for the cavalry at Fort Walla Walla. The post office was established in 1878, and in 1882 the name was changed to Viola, in honor of the first postmaster's daughter.

### ***Fruit Industry Developed***

People came from great distances to buy fruit from the Palmer's orchard, and later the town had an important fruit industry, including a cider mill, packing plants and dryers, and a box factory. In 1884 Viola had two general stores, a three-story hotel, two boarding houses, a church, school house, blacksmith shop, livery stable, stage coach stop, five saloons and a grist mill. Because of the nearby forests, there were several sawmills in the area.

However, it was a community further south with the awkward name of Hog Heaven that would become the county seat and population center of Latah County. In

1871 Noah and Asbury Lieuallen and 20 other families, many of them from Walla Walla and Oregon, entered the valley. The name Hog Heaven referred to the camas roots that fattened their pigs. The story is told that the name was changed to Paradise Valley because of the women's strong objections. In 1876 because there was another Paradise town in Idaho, the U.S. Post Office requested the name be changed, and the postmaster Samuel Neff selected Moscow, after his former residence in Moscow, Pennsylvania.

In the first decade, Moscow developed like other towns throughout the county. One new merchant, the 45-five-year old William J. McConnell, established a small store that would eventually become the largest merchandising firm in the region.

### ***Created by Act of Congress***

Until 1888 there was no Latah County, as it was part of Nez Perce County with Lewiston the county seat. Conducting legal business meant a long and difficult journey down the Lewiston Hill, and county residents, particularly Genesee and Moscow politicians, made several attempts to create a new county. There was much rivalry over which town would be the county seat. Finally, in 1888 Congress passed legislation creating Latah County and establishing Moscow as the county seat. William McConnell headed a committee that selected the name "Latah," combining two Nez Perce words. La-Kah, large, pine tree, and Tah-ol, stone pestles used to grind camas roots into flour. Latah, therefore, means the place of the pestle and pine.

Legislation creating Latah County also provided for a county courthouse, which the new government immediately constructed. The next year, 1889, Moscow won another political and economic prize, the University of Idaho.

The new state university began as a single Gothic styled building on a lonely hill. Because Idaho had few secondary schools, its new university included a preparatory school to qualify students as freshman. Of the first 135 students who enrolled in 1892, only 15 were in college-level classes.

Using insurance money from the fire that destroyed the administration building in

1906, President MacLean began a rapid expansion of the campus. New buildings included Morrill Hall which housed the agricultural college. As a land-grant institution the University of Idaho was obligated to provide military training, and university cadets drilled on the lawns. Extension services offered to students and all people of Idaho helped insure the agricultural future of the county and state.

With its new university, Moscow entered a construction boom. Large, handsome brick buildings replaced the wooden store fronts along Main Street. The Skattaboe Block, built in 1891, testifies to this early prosperity. Kenneth Oliver Skattaboe was a prosperous local farmer, territorial legislator, first president of a local farmers' union, and a founder of a Moscow bank. His family lived on the outskirts of town, moving into his business building during the winter because the roads were impassable.

Main Street sprouted several banks, handsome department stores, and the Moscow Hotel. The hotel was built in 1891 on the site of the Barton House which burned in 1890. The impressive new, brick hotel had ground level shops selling candy and cigars, a barbershop, and a bar. The side entrance was for ladies.

### ***Wealth Displayed by Homes***

In the residential districts, merchants and businessmen displayed their wealth in handsome homes of various styles. Jerome Day, from the Coeur d'Alene mining family and president of the Moscow State Bank and the Idaho National Harvester Company, a senator and regent of the University of Idaho built a Queen Ann home with a massive wrap-around porch. William McConnell, a state senator and governor, favored a combination of Eastlake, Queen Ann, and Victorian Gothic styles for his impressive home. It now houses the Latah County Historical Society.

It was the railroad that bound together the separate parts of the county. In 1885 the Northern Pacific reached Moscow, and two special lines, the Washington, Idaho and Montana and the Inland Electric moved people and freight from the farthest corner of Bovill to the regional center of Spokane. The Inland Electric also brought

electricity to communities like Viola. Special trains made it easy for towns to attend football games, fourth of July celebrations, and events like the grand opening of the Moscow Hotel. Newcomers brought their household goods and livestock in railroad cars, and immigration and population rapidly increased in the late 1880s. By the 1890s, it was difficult to buy good farmland. Railroads promoted the prosperity of communities like Genesee and Juliaetta, but towns without rail connections declined. Stage stops that had served pack trains and travellers with horses and wagon largely disappeared.

Road construction was a cooperative venture and created a revolution of travel, trade, and recreation. Moscow, the county seat and University town, benefited as a trading center, while nearby communities like Troy and Genesee lost local stores and customers.

Machines brought about another revolution, this one in agriculture. The sharply rolling Palouse hills had first discouraged settlers who farmed along bottomlands. When they discovered that the deep, fertile top soil extended to the tops of the hills, farmers immediately cultivated all but the steepest slopes. On the large Palouse farms, teams of up to 45 horses or mules pulled large combines with special leveling devices. In order to command the long string of horses, the driver sat on a high ladder-like perch. When the team pulled up a hill, the driver was almost touching their backs.

### ***'Little Idaho' Harvested Grain***

Although the large teams were popular subjects for photographs, farmers preferred smaller combines and fewer horses and crew members to feed. In 1905 two Moscow blacksmiths, Cornelius Quesnell and N. N. Anderson, patented a push combine, and a group of businessmen began manufacturing the combine which they named the Idaho International Harvester. The "Little Idaho" used only six to eight horses and could be operated by two men, the sack-sewer and the puncher. The puncher stood on a metal platform and operated a rudder wheel to turn the binder. He also operated the sickle bar and brake rope. The "Little



Idaho" was popular among western farmers, but shortages of materials and workers during World War I ended its manufacture.

The harvest crews had specialized tasks. On the pull-type combine the teamster handled the horses, the mechanic tended to the equipment, the header man adjusted the height of the sickle bar, and one man sacked the grain and a second sewed the sacks, leaving two ears on each side. A roustabout rode a saddle horse along the left side of the team and also ran errands for the crew. The women who cooked and served meals in the compact cook houses were indispensable. The success in hiring good harvest crews could depend on the reputation of the cooks who worked from before sunrise to late at night. Palouse farmers once grew a variety of crops, beginning with pioneer crops of flax and oats. But the high profits in wheat during World War I convinced them to concentrate on that crop. They removed outbuildings and fences to extend their fields, and dairy and cattle herds largely disappeared. Because the local fruit industry could not compete with irrigated orchards in central Washington, many orchards were taken out or abandoned. New machine-driven combines and tractors replaced draft horses, and farmers no longer had to plant hay crops or maintain large barns.

### ***County Once Had 99 Towns***

Many changes have come about. Once Latah County had 51 official post offices and over 130 schools. Only 11 post offices are still active, and in 1946 the many school districts were reorganized into five. There were once 99 towns and settlements here; now only eleven are viable. All the small sawmills are gone. Farmers no longer reserve Saturday as an all-day excursion to

town; railroads are pulling up their iron rails and ties, and passenger service is only a memory. Paved highways bypass the curving country roads. The country landscape has lost its variety of fences, barns, orchards, gardens, and clusters of outbuildings. At one time the county fair proudly displayed fruits and vegetables intended for markets across the country; now the produce shows off the efforts of home gardeners.

Still a spirit of Latah County's history remains. During the summer almost every town celebrates with a special day devoted to fun and remembering. Many of Kendrick's locust trees are gone, but Locust Blossom Festival attracts old-timers and newcomers from around the country. The Potlatch mill is an empty field, but across town in the city park crowds of people gather on a July Sunday to watch ax-throwing and chain-sawing competitions.

Moscow hosts numerous cultural activities through the University and the community. Its cultural year begins with Mardi Gras, then continues with the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, Renaissance Faire, Rendezvous in the Park, an ice cream social, International Fair, and a Victorian Christmas at the McConnell Mansion. Interspersed are ballets, theater, art and quilt shows, historical exhibits, musical performances, and a host of symposiums and special events.

Latah County, its towns and university still make their mark in the world. It is up to us to understand, preserve and pass on that special heritage. There is a wealth of books, reminiscences, oral history interviews, photographs and artifacts that can teach us and our children about this corner of Idaho. The Latah County Historical Society invites you to become an active and interested participant in Latah County's history. This is an on-going challenge for our next century.

***About the author.*** . . Dr. Mary E. Reed holds a doctor of philosophy degree in history from the University of California, Berkley, and has been director of the Latah County Historical Society since 1983. She has published numerous articles in the *Latah Legacy*. She is chair of the Latah County Centennial Committee.

## Czechoslovakians Form Large Part of **Idaho's Eastern European Americans**

By Mary E. Reed

Eastern Europe is a composite of political units, generally not conforming to clearly defined geographical boundaries. The region can be described as bounded on the north by the Baltic Sea, on the south by the Mediterranean, on the southeast by the Black Sea and the Aegean, and on the southwest by the Adriatic. The western boundary can be drawn from the eastern corner of the Alps, through the western fringe of the Central European plain to the Danube, and beyond to the mountains of Bohemia. This is a five-hundred mile, natural barrier, but the line separating Poland and Czechoslovakia from Germany transects a flat plain.

A majority of Eastern Europeans are identified as Slavs based on their language and cultural traditions. However, Eastern Europe encompasses numerous ethnic groups that have their own distinctive languages, such as the Magyars, Ruthenes, and Latvians. In addition, the term Bohemian was commonly used in referring to people of Czech or Slovak descent who lived in the political region that became Czechoslovakia in 1918. The term "Bohemian" was used long after the political state disappeared.

Over the centuries the peoples of Eastern Europe experienced repeated periods of devastating warfare, political and cultural subjugation, and economic dislocation. One result was a massive migration to America, which the emigrants viewed as a land of opportunity and personal independence. The Eastern Europeans who emigrated to the United States usually first settled in the large eastern cities, particularly the large coal mining and manufacturing centers. The Polish emigration was in response to land consolidation by large landowners who uprooted the peasants. The great period of Polish immigration, known as "Za Chelbem,"

for bread, occurred between 1870 and 1914. Later, artisans, intellectuals, sons of the lower gentry, and agriculturists left Poland. The total Polish emigration to the United States reached 3.6 million by 1914. However, few Poles are represented among Idaho's ethnic groups.

More representative of East European ethnic groups in Idaho are the Czechs. The Czechs have a long history of migration to the United States beginning with emigration after the 1848 revolution in Prague. By 1880 the Czechs were well-established in the United States. The Czechs left the lands of the Austrian Empire for many reasons, including the suppression of their culture (the Czech language could not be used for official business), dislike of compulsory service in the Austrian army, and the rigid class structure. In addition, many of the emigrant Czechs were non-Catholics who resented the harsh measures of the Counter Reformation in the Austrian

Empire. Statistics indicate that the Czech migration was in large part based on cultural dissatisfaction. Of other Slavic groups in the United States, the Czech emigrants had a higher literacy rate for both men and women. Among Eastern European immigrants, they represented the more skilled and educated people. This ethnic immigrant group included skilled laborers, artisans, tradesmen, and intellectuals as well as farmers. The largest Czech settlement in the United States was in Cleveland, and large rural settlements were located in Wisconsin.

Although a majority of Eastern European groups are represented in Idaho, their numbers are small. The small numbers of these groups in this state can be partially explained by that fact that immigrants from this part of Europe generally preferred living together in cities rather than in isolated communities which characterized most of

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Idaho. Migrations from East Europe often responded to conflicts in those countries or the desire to escape conscription into the Austrian-Hungarian army.

An overall view of census figures reveals that ethnic groups from Eastern Europe constituted a small minority of foreign-born people in the Idaho population. Poles, Hungarians, Rumanians, and Bulgarians never constituted more than one percent of the foreign-born stock. Czechs reached 1.7 percent and Yugoslavs reached 1.6 percent in 1930. The highest percentage of ethnic groups from the U.S.S.R. occurred in 1940 and 1930 with 4.6 and 3.7 percentages respectively. The real numbers underscore this point. The 1870 census lists one person from Bohemia, twelve from Poland, and ten from Russia. By 1900 census figures indicate that during this period of growth in Idaho, Eastern Europeans still constituted a small minority of foreign-born newcomers to the state with only 500 among the foreign-born populations. In 1960, of a total of 82,759 people listed as foreign stock, 7,053 listed Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, the U.S.S.R. and Rumania as their country of birth.

### ***Twin Falls Attracted Many***

The largest influx of immigrants from Eastern European appears to have occurred from 1910 to 1930. The 1920 census lists a total of 38,963 foreign-born whites in Idaho. Of this total, 420 were from Czechoslovakia and 460 were from Yugoslavia. Both countries were formed after World War I with the dismemberment of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. In addition, there were 1,453 from Russia in this category. The figures of foreign born from Eastern Europe per county suggest areas for further research. In 1920, Twin Falls County had the largest number of foreign-born Czechs with 120, and 31 were living in Canyon County. Unlike the dispersed pattern of settlement of Eastern Europeans throughout most of Idaho, the Czechs in these two counties maintained cultural traditions through lodges and community celebrations. A total of 156 foreign-born Yugoslavs lived in Shoshone County where their major occupation was mining. A majority of the Russian-born immigrants lived in counties with irrigation

projects. The largest number, 258, was in Power County with other relatively large populations in Minidoka County and Bingham Counties. Yugoslavs, which comprise a variety of southern Slavic groups, clustered in Shoshone, Ada, Lemhi and Clearwater Counties from 1920 to 1940.

### ***Borah Was of Czech Origin***

Although there have been a few distinct colonies of Eastern Europeans living in Idaho, many of our associations of Idahoans from Eastern Europe are with distinguished individuals, such as Senators William E. Borah and Henry Dworshak of Czech origin. One of the most notable Idaho Slavs was Edward C. Pulaski whose great-grandfather Casimir had served as a general in George Washington's army. After working as a miner in Wallace, Edward joined the Forest Service. During the catastrophic 1910 fire storm in northern Idaho, he heroically saved the lives of his crew. He is also known as the inventor of the 'pulaski' fire-fighting tool which combines a single-bit ax with an adz-shaped hoe extending from the back. The pulaski is still an important part of fire-fighting equipment.

The earlier immigrants from Eastern Europe also worked on railroad crews in the western states. A government report on "Immigrants in Industries" completed in 1909 indicates that Eastern Europeans usually were hired as common laborers or section hands and that 69.6 percent of the Croatians and 97 percent of the Bulgarians working on the railroads had been in the United States less than five years. These data indicate a common pattern among married and unmarried young men from these countries. After working a sufficient time to accumulate money for their families in the home country, they could return to their villages and live in comparative comfort and with the prestige of having been abroad. As in other labor markets, particularly lumbering, Slavs and other Eastern Europeans often were hired when there were shortages of English-speaking workers. They in turn were given preference over Asians and African Americans. The Greeks, Austrians (including the Slavs living in the Austrian Empire), and Scandinavians were paid \$1.50 per day as compared to the Japanese who received from

\$1.20 to \$1.40 per day. The road masters reported preferences for hiring, beginning with the North Europeans, the Austrians, Russians, Italians, Greeks, and Japanese in that order. Another section of the 1909 report describing construction notes that all the laborers were industrious with the exception of the Greeks. Among the Europeans, the foremen ranked the Italians, Croatians, and Bulgarians first and the Greeks last in desirability. In Idaho, Montenegrins were on crews that constructed the Milwaukee railway through North Idaho in 1908.

### ***Worked in Logging Mills***

Eastern Europeans were well represented in the logging industries in Northern Idaho. The relatively high numbers are suggested in a newspaper account. In 1918 a Serbian representative recruited eight Slavic men to join the United States Army and had the names of 50 others who were to leave for induction in Spokane. According to a newspaper notice of May 7, 1918, the men were Serbians, Croats, and other Slavs who had been working in the lumber camps of the Blackwell Lumber Company near Fernwood and the Potlatch Lumber Company located near Bovill. The story also suggests the connection between Eastern Europeans and their native lands, especially during times of invasion and occupation as occurred in World War I.

Evidence of Eastern Europeans in North Idaho's logging industry is well-documented in oral history collections. Interviews reveal reasons for their immigration and some of their experiences. Michael Bubuly, a Serb who worked for Potlatch Company as a logger, lived in Bovill at the time he was interviewed in 1974. Bubuly's father left Serbia in 1913, just before the outbreak of World War I which originated in that country. He borrowed money to come to the United States, first living in Minnesota. After working in the lumber industry there, he heard about opportunities in the Idaho woods. He came to Bovill where he worked for several years, sending money back to his family in Serbia. Michael decided to join his father, and with money from his father emigrated to Latah County where he worked for the Potlatch Lumber Company. The region reminded him of his

native country, and the resemblance to ones native land was a common reason many immigrants selecting a particular area to settle in.

Bubuly remembered hard times for him and his father:

"That was my first place to work when I was a kid. And I worked with him with the horses and all, swamping, what they call swamping, knocking limbs off the trees, logs and stuff like that; and sawed logs, crosscut saw. Which was mighty hard work, now, I can tell ya that. And that was in 1913 when I came here, and my dad, he was only 56 years old then, but he was gettin' crippled up with rheumatism so bad that he couldn't, he was afraid he couldn't continue working, and didn't have enough money that he could retire and live. So, he decided he'd better leave and go back and see the rest of this family. He didn't have much money, he had about \$3,000. All his life savings. And he went back there and bought some land."

### ***Brothers Fought Austria***

When Austrians invaded Serbia in World War I, Michael's two brothers became guerrilla fighters. His older brother died of pneumonia and his younger brother was killed by the Germans. The immigrants retained strong attachments to their native country, which was especially true with the Serbs, as Bubuly recounts:

"Tell you one thing, I was a pretty lonesome kid after he left. And in St. Maries where he took the train, I went that far with him. After he left I was pretty lonesome nights, because I knew I'd never see him again. But, anyway, I got by pretty good. I worked and my health was good, and I worked and made a good living."

Bubuly remembered that in the period 1910 to 1918 there were quite a few Yugoslavs around Bovill, perhaps a couple of hundred, working in the woods:

"They didn't have their homes, they were just lumberjacks. When they were not working they were in Spokane, or had a little shack in town some place, Troy or Deary, or Bovill or someplace. A shanty and when they's not working they bach. They do their own cooking and stuff like that. Work opens up again, they go to work."

Some Yugoslavs were section workers on the railroads, but most were lumberjacks, working as sawyers or building log decks. They, like Bubuly, came from a forested area in Yugoslavia, and as he explained, they had been raised right in the timber, "just lived to be in the timber and wilderness. . . They enjoyed it."

According to Bubuly, most of the Yugoslavs he knew were older men. Some had older brothers, an uncle, or father who had sent money for them to come. Many of them who spent time in cities like Spokane and Seattle became bootleggers. Bootlegging was easier than logging. In fact, Bubuly was offered jobs with bootleggers time and time again.

He remembered being asked, "Why do you stay in the woods, why don't you get down town here and live like a man?" He responded, "I'm living like a man where I'm at, livin' better'n you are."

### ***Some Were Bootleggers***

The bootleggers offered him \$250 a week to run whiskey from Metaline Falls to Bovill, and they promised to give him \$10 a day if he was jailed. Some of the younger lumberjacks became bootleggers, but came out of the experience broke. Some got in trouble so many times that they were deported.

Another Eastern European working as a logger in North Idaho was Sam Pivach. He lived in Elk River, a town built by Potlatch Lumber Company. Pivach had a small, independent business making fence posts and cutting pulpwood and sawing logs. He hired many men with families during the depression although he could not pay very much.

Some Bohemian families lived in the Cavendish-Southwick area of Clearwater County. Sister Jane deChantal Kazda relates the story of her family who immigrated from Heyna in Bohemia to Idaho. Her account describes the process by which family members of ethnic groups emigrated to Idaho, and it suggests the importance of family ties. Jane Kazda was the youngest of 10 children. Her father died when she was four years old. The eldest son left Bohemia first, staying with an uncle in Wisconsin. He wrote to the family frequently, telling them about the many Bohemian families

that had settled in America. Later he bought property in Idaho.

### ***Lived Near Kendrick***

In 1897 the mother and the rest of children emigrated, arriving in New York, and then traveling by train to Kendrick where they were met by her brother, Charley. Their knowledge of German made the journey easier. Although Charley owned timberland, he had no home of his own but lived wherever he had a job as a day laborer for a farmer. The Kazdas lived in the Kendrick area where they rented a small place on Bear Ridge. Her cousin who had lived in Chicago and had married a young Bohemian, Joe Svoboda, moved to Idaho to live nearby. Her younger brother Frank, an accomplished musician, joined the Pavel family and worked in Lewiston.

Another family member, her aunt, came to Southwick. The aunt remembered the difficulty of learning to speak English:

"Although we had been in America a year we did not speak English. At home and with the Soumars we used our mother tongue. My cousin told me that at the beginning of school the teacher would first ask me what page my reading lesson was on; I should answer 24. To her second question, 'How old are you?' my answer should be nine. The teacher asked me questions as my cousins said she would. Not understanding her words I did not know that her first question was: 'How old are you?' I gave her the first answer I had prepared. The children and the teacher laughed . . . With difficulty I was made to understand that words in English were sounded out differently than in Bohemian."

Another reference to a Slavic family from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire was Jacob Tatko who was born in 1896 in Kleinlornitz. He was the second of seven children, and his father was a shoemaker who owned some land on which to raise food for the family. Like other Slavs in pre-war Europe, Tatko left to find a more secure life and better opportunities in America. And like other immigrants, he and a friend from his village first joined his older sister who was living in Pennsylvania. After five years of working as a general laborer in an iron foundry and a furniture factory, Tatko moved

on to Idaho to work for his uncle. In Idaho he moved onto a homestead farmed by two relatives, Anna and John Koritko. The homestead was located on the Nez Perce prairie when the reservation was opened to settlement.

### ***Craftsmen Followed Trades***

Many of the immigrants from Eastern Europe were craftsmen who followed these trades in Idaho. The Francl family operated a brewery in Moscow, and the Muzick family in Juliaetta had a shoemaking business. A Czech family, Kulhanek, operated a shoemaking business on Main Street. The family lived behind the shop, and according to Moscow novelist Carol Brink, were noted for their lively and jovial behavior. Shoemaking may have been a common occupation among Czech immigrants. In southern Idaho, Anton Bobal was a Czech who operated a shoe and harness repair shop in Buhl which had originally been owned by another Czech, Frank Vanek.

The most recent events in Eastern Europe may increase the numbers of immigrants to Idaho where they could join others who have settled here, either as farmers, businessmen, or more recently as refugees. It is important that their presence in Idaho be documented, especially in view of the sketchy information available on previous immigrants from this part of the world. Although oral history interviews have succeeded in preserving some information about Eastern Europeans, most of our information on these ethnic groups remains scattered in personal reminiscences and scrapbooks. Clearly more interviews with members of these groups are necessary as well as efforts to identify their presence. The important contributions Eastern European immigrants have made to Idaho's economy through min-

ing, farming, logging, and small businesses could provide a focus for further study.

### **Bibliographical Notes**

Although there are few good works on the experiences of Slavic immigrants to the United States, one good study is Vera Laska, ed., *The Czechs in America, Ethnic Chronology Series No. 28* (New York, 1978). Background information on Slavic immigrants to Idaho can be found in Merle Wells, "Slavs of Idaho," which will be published in a volume entitled *Idaho's Peoples*, by the University of Utah Press. Information on Eastern European laborers is in the volume, U.S. Congress, Senate Document, Vol. 85, Part 2, *Immigrants in Industries*, Ch. 2, Vol. III, "Maintenance of Way." The newspaper account of Slavs recruited in 1918 is from Jo Hammes, *Living World War I*, St. Maries, Idaho, n.d. Interviews with Michael Bubuly were conducted by Sam Schrage in 1974 for the Latah County Historical Society. Transcripts of the five interviews with Bubuly are also at the University of Idaho Library and the Idaho State Historical Society Library. Information about the Kadza family is from private papers of Sister Jane deChantal. A copy of that manuscript is at the Idaho State Historical Society Library. The description of the Tatko family is from the volume by Jo Thomason, ed., *1984 Highland of Craig Mountain*. Herman Ronnenberg's article, "Francl's Moscow Brewery: From Success to Smoldering Ruin," which appeared in *Idaho Yesterdays*, 243:1, Spring, 1980, describes one of the numerous small businesses owned by Czechs in Idaho. The personal reminiscences of the Kulhanek family is from Carol Ryrie Brink's manuscript, "A Chain of Hands," at the Latah County Historical Society.

**The first white men in Latah County were trappers who named the region "The Palouse" after the major village of the Palouse Indians. Next came traders, missionaries, and miners who moved through the valley on their way to find gold in the nearby mountains. The first permanent settlers came with their families and livestock in the late 1960s.**

# Swedes, Norwegian, Danes Make Up **Latah County's Scandinavians**

By Mary E. Reed

The Scandinavians constituted a large component of the non-English speaking ethnic groups in Idaho. For example, in 1900, Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes constituted 23 percent of the total foreign born in Idaho while Germans were 12 percent. English-speaking immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Canada constituted the largest group of almost 39 percent.

Northern Europeans first emigrated to the New World in 1638, settling in New Sweden which was located in the present state of Delaware. The year 1825 marks the beginning of the modern period of emigration, with Norwegians and Swedes among the first groups who came to the United States. Danish immigration became significant beginning in 1860, and the Finns arrived during the second wave of immigration, with the peak of Finnish immigration occurring between the years 1880 and 1920.

As with many other immigrant groups, Scandinavians left their homelands because of increasing population and economic distress. Wages were extremely low, and there were few employment opportunities for young men and women. The typical immigrant was a small farmer or a farm laborer, and many of the Scandinavian immigrants to Idaho were young men who had worked as laborers in their native country. When they arrived in the United States they often moved from place to place. Those who eventually arrived in northern Idaho often stopped in Spokane before going on to the Idaho mines or logging camps. In 1870, 3.1 percent of Idaho's foreign-born population, or 9,805, were from the three Scandinavian countries. By 1890 that number had grown to 20 percent, and in the period 1910 to 1930, 25 percent of Idaho's foreign born

population were from these three countries. Danish immigration to Idaho reached a peak in 1890 with a percentage of 7.1 percent of the total foreign born. By 1940 that figure had dropped to 5.2 percent. The Norwegian Americans constituted only .08 percent of the foreign-born population in 1870; by 1890 that figure had increased to 4.2 percent, reaching a peak of 6.9 percent in 1930. Swedish immigrants constituted only 1.2 percent in 1870, but by 1900 this percentage had increased to 11.5. In 1930 the number of foreign born Swedes in the Idaho population was 13.4 percent.

A government study, "Immigrants in Industries," published in 1909 found that Scandinavian immigrants involved in farming usually began working as farm hands for other Scandinavian farmers. According to the report, they and the German immigrants progressed faster in learning English than other ethnic

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"Swedish and Norwegian populations were particularly high in Latah County."

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groups because of the similarity among the languages and because of their freer association with native Americans. A high percentage of Scandinavian farmers subscribed to English newspapers.

Also contributing to rapid assimilation was the fact that the second generation often married non-Scandinavians. Scandinavian immigrants were concentrated in southeastern and northern Idaho, and these patterns persisted from 1880 through the 1920s and beyond. Swedish and Norwegian populations were particularly high in Latah County. For example, in 1900, 32 percent of Idaho's foreign-born Norwegians and 19 percent of its Swedes lived in that county. In northern Idaho, the high percentages of foreign-born Norwegians and Swedes reveal the attraction of these northern European immigrants to this forested part of Idaho.

In 1920, 45 percent of Idaho's foreign-born Swedes and 53.7 percent of its foreign-

born Norwegians lived in Latah, Kootenai, Bonner, Shoshone, and Benewah counties. However, many foreign-born Swedes also lived in southern Idaho as a result of Mormon missionaries and colonization from Utah. The majority of foreign-born Danes during this period lived in the southern Idaho counties bordering Utah, also reflecting the influence of Mormon missionary activity. In 1890, 75 percent of Idaho's foreign-born Danes were living in Bear Lake, Bingham and Oneida counties, a number that decreased to 61 percent by 1910.

### ***Moved to Farming***

Statistical breakdowns of occupations show that of a total of 179 Scandinavians employed in Idaho in 1870, 106 were miners and only 37 worked in agriculture. During the next decades this proportion rapidly changed with an influx of Scandinavians taking up uncleared land in the panhandle and desert land in the southeast. These southern Idaho Scandinavian immigrants moved into southern Idaho from Mormon settlements in central and north Utah.

According to one study of North Idaho's Scandinavian immigrants, the general public and the press placed immigrants from northern Europe in a middle position of acceptability. Generally, immigrants from Great Britain enjoyed an enviable, high place on the social ladder. Merchants and craftsmen from middle Europe were regarded with some respect, and the 'Nordics' occupied a place just below them. The southern Europeans received the roughest treatment of all ethnic groups except for the Chinese who suffered the most racial and legal abuse. Newspapers usually did not use the names of Italians, Slavs and African Americans in their stories.

Other sources have found evidence that employers and labor contractors preferred northern Europeans over other immigrant workers. A Potlatch Company official once instructed the labor contractor to hire white labor first, explaining that this meant Swedes and Norwegians. Members of different ethnic groups, including Northern Europeans, often lived in the same section of a town, and each group had a spokesman. This person was the best educated and served as the contact person for the outside.

In both mining and logging towns, there were often boarding houses catering to a particular ethnic group.

The Lutheran Church was another important cultural force, and in the small mining and logging towns of northern Idaho, ministers often served more than one congregation. In addition, Swedes and Norwegians often had their own churches in the same town, and until the 1920s they maintained services in their separate languages. As congregations decreased in size the churches often merged. Scandinavians formed an important work force in logging camps throughout northern Idaho and their close association with working in the woods is reflected in the nicknames given some logging tools. The cross-cut saw was named the "Swede Fiddle" because if sharpened correctly it would actually sing.

### ***Oral Histories Taken***

The Scandinavians in Latah County have been relatively well-documented through oral history interviews as well as other sources. Scandinavian populations were high in the northern counties of Bonners Ferry, Clearwater, Kootenai, Shoshone, and Latah. In 1890 Latah County had 44 percent of the total foreign-born Swedish population in Idaho and 23 percent of the Norwegian. In 1900, foreign-born Swedes, Norwegians and Danes constituted 27.9 percent, 20 percent, and 3.6 percent respectively of the foreign-born populations in that county. There were only 42 foreign-born Danes in Latah County in that year. The majority of Swedish and Norwegian immigrants arrived in Latah County in the 1880s and 1890s, although immigration continued into the 1920s.

The Swedes and Norwegians settled in three main areas of the county: the open and fertile farmlands around Genesee, uncleared farmland and forested ridges in the Troy and Deary area, and in Moscow. A general immigration pattern was to first settle in the Midwest or California before moving on to Idaho, sometimes with a stop-over in Spokane. Information on the Scandinavians who settled in Idaho and Latah County suggests that they usually had financial resources to purchase land and were acquainted with the language and customs,



# Troy

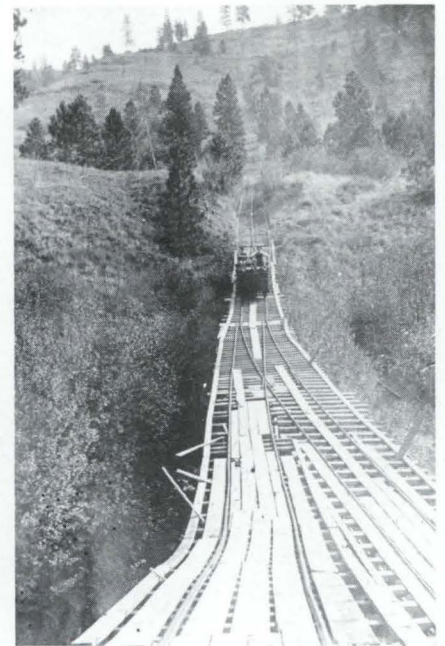
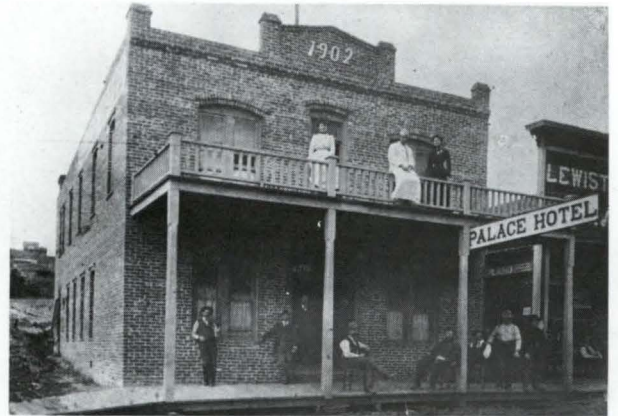


Directly above is the early fire brick factory at Troy. From there, counterclockwise, a view of early Troy from the hilltop; Main Street in Troy in 1909; Troy's Hotel Reitmann in 1908; and the town sees the High School band off for Spokane at the Troy railroad station in 1926.



# Juliaetta

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On the right is the Juliaetta tramway as it existed in about 1912 to transport grain and other farm products. Note that the track splits in two in the foreground so that the cars could be switched to either the upper or lower levels of the warehouse. Counterclockwise from there, the Palace Hotel built in 1902; and the Main Street of Juliaetta between 1900 and 1910.

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## Helmer



Shown at left is the school house in Helmer. No date was provided on the photograph.

# Harvard

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The photograph at the right shows early Harvard when the train depot was one of the main buildings in town.



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# Bovill

Lord and Lady Bovill brought a touch of elegance to the North Idaho woods with their famous Bovill Hotel, at right. Below is the hotel's sumptuous (for its time) dining room. Below is the Main Street of Bovill before the fire of 1914.



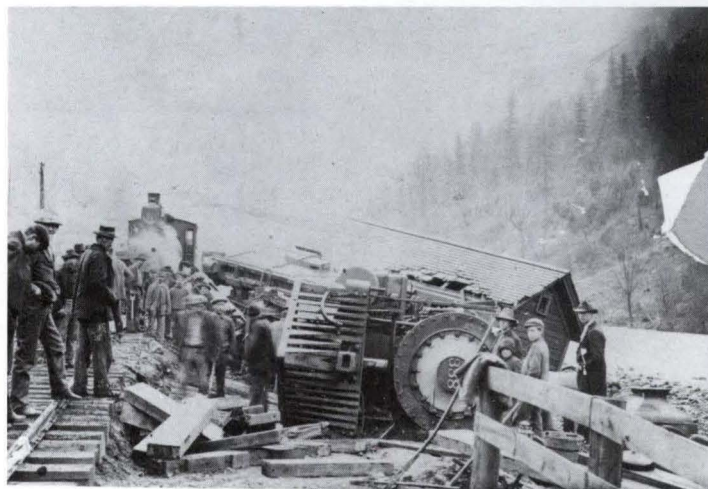


Latah County's early courthouse, upper left, was replaced by the present courthouse on the same site. Then, counterclockwise, a crew of workers for Frank Robinson's Psychiana is shown outside the building; one of the first Blue Mountain Rock Festivals in the University of Idaho Arboretum in the late 1960s; the wading pool in East City Park; and above, the wedding picture of Mi and Marie Lew who are the subject of an article on page 32.





Mail carriers (including the horse) in Kendrick in 1920 are shown above. Clockwise from there, the Potlatch Fruit Fair held in Kendrick in 1896; steady hands at the linotype in the office of the Kendrick Gazette; the train wreck that caused the 1900 flood in Kendrick by tearing up the dike track; and an early horse-drawn hearse.



## Princeton

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The Fourth of July is celebrated by a parade down Main Street in Princeton. The year is 1915.

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## Hampton

The Starner store at Hampton in the early 1890s. Hampton was about one mile east of present-day Princeton.



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## Collins



Here is shown one of the early homestead cabins near Collins, a town about four miles north of present-day Bovill.



The town of Joel in 1940 and its grain elevator.

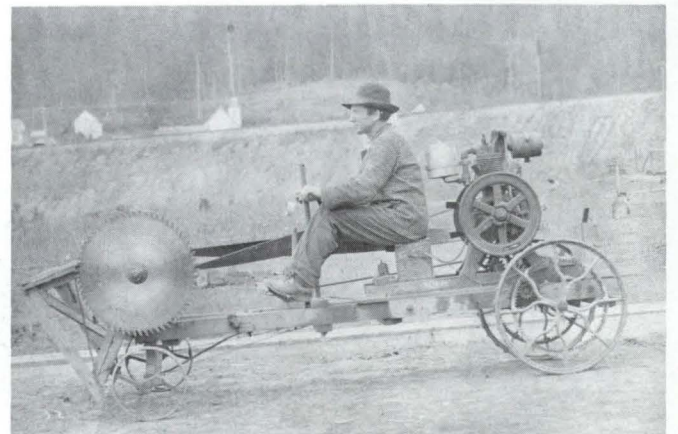
*Park*



The early post office at Park. Park existed about four miles southeast of Deary.

*Deary*

On the right is a mechanized saw and woodcutter at Deary; below is the town of Deary about 1910.



The Spokane & Inland Electric Train rolls in to the Violaway station on the right. Below that is the dormitory for the Seventh Day Adventist's School, "Thatuna Academy," in 1905. Below on the left is the Palmer apple packing house near Viola in 1910. Viola was first known as Palouse Bridge.



# Genesee

One of the most picturesque churches in the area, the Genesee Valley Lutheran Church in the 1950s.





an advantage gained from their previous experiences working and living in other parts of the United States before moving to Idaho.

Swedes and Norwegians were persuaded to move to Idaho by family and friends who wrote and visited them. One of these recruiters was the Swede Per Johanson who lived in the Troy area. Upon learning that land east of Troy was being surveyed for homesteads, he returned to Minnesota to tell his friends about the free land. He offered to move with them and bring his sawmill machinery. One of his recruits, John Fredrick Osterberg, immigrated in 1885 and in turn convinced other Minnesotans to come to Latah County.

### ***Tall Tales Told***

Among the tall tales sent back to Minnesota was one by Joe Osterberg who claimed that carrots grew so large it took 12 horses to pull them out of the ground. Carl Olson, another Swedish immigrant to Latah County, was famous for his tales:

"... and here I stood and shot 40, 50 deer. Right here! And then he shot one behind a big bull pine, y'know, a big tree like this. And they said, 'how can you hit 'em behind there?' 'Oh,' he said, 'I sighted on the tree, and then when I pulled the trigger, I yanked the gun around and the bullet went around, like that.' . . . An then about the hills, y'know. They come from Minnesota, quite a few of them here, and he was too, you know, it's level ground there. So then they wrote over here to Osterberg and said, 'It's pretty hilly out there, though, isn't it.' He bragged everything else up, y'know, so they thought they was gonna get the best of him there. 'Hilly! That's nothing,' he said, 'it all leans downhill!' . . . 'Well,' he said, 'there's a creek running there, below where I live. I have to cross the creek in my wagon, and when I got across the creek I had it half full of fish. The wheels caught 'em and throwed 'em up in there.'"

Many of the Swedes and Norwegians who homesteaded in Latah County selected forested land on the ridges because it was available and because they preferred living in timbered areas. It was also commonly believed that timbered land was more productive than prairies or open land. Conse-

quently, they settled in some of the more isolated areas of the county around Troy and Deary where homesteading was more difficult. Many of the new arrivals, like John, Anna and the six Frid children had to walk 20 to 25 miles from the Moscow train station to the site of their new home on Dry Ridge, carrying their possessions over a trail.

Many Swedes were skilled woodsmen and quickly constructed cabins and outbuildings on the homesteads. The method of clearing land began with girding the trees and felling them after they died. The trees were then burned. After clearing an area, the settlers used a breaking plow that cut through roots. John Frid was able to clear half an acre a day. The soil was left fallow for a year, and then roots were chopped out with a grub hoe. Frid worked at Per Johanson's sawmill during the week, leaving for work early Monday morning on foot and returning Saturday evening, usually bringing provisions home to his family.

### ***Women Worked Hard***

Homesteading could be particularly difficult for women. Willa Cummings Carlson recalled her trips from her homestead to Moscow which was 20 miles away. She would leave home at five in the morning with her baby in a skin sack on her back. By one o'clock she was on her way home with a 50-pound sack of flour, a pound of coffee, salt, tobacco, and two herrings in her skin sack with the baby strapped to her chest. She arrived home at seven in the evening.

The Scandinavian wives often had to take care of the homestead, livestock, gardens, and the children when their husbands were gone for long periods working for the railroads, on harvest crews, at mines and at sawmills. These jobs were necessary to earn enough money for their families until they could clear land and put in crops. The best paying work was on harvest crews of Swedes who had settled in the open, rich grassland around Genesee. The homestead farmers also cut wood which they brought into Troy to be shipped by rail to Genesee, Moscow and Spokane for firewood and building. Women earned money by selling butter, chickens and eggs, and some younger, unmarried women worked as cooks in lumber

camps and for harvest crews, traveling with the cook wagons.

Per Johanson proved helpful to the Swedish homesteaders by hauling their heavier furnishings in his wagon and by setting up a sawmill at Nora. He often paid his help in lumber which they in turn traded for food. Other Swedes also established sawmills in the Deary-Troy area, including Ole Bohman who later became president of the First Bank of Troy, and O. K. Olson. By the last part of the 1880s, the area from Nora to Big Bear Creek was almost entirely settled by Swedes, and Dry Ridge was known as Little Sweden because its population was entirely Swedish. As one resident explained, "It wasn't so little Sweden, either, it took in a lot of territory, I tell you. Swedes did; they took a lot of territory."

### *Small Colonies Formed*

The Scandinavians often formed smaller colonies when one family was joined by other relatives and friends. The Frid family who moved to Dry Ridge in 1886 convinced three other families to take up nearby homesteads. Because of the large number of Swedes in the Troy area, it became known as a Swede town. One resident from the Troy area recalled the large number of Swedes in Troy:

"And we came on the train to Troy and there were a lot of men on the train, and they were talking a language we never heard. We couldn't understand what they were talking about, and a lot of them got off in Troy. And afterwards we heard that they were lumberjacks, and they had been in Spokane for a weekend or something . . . They'd work and earn some money, then they'd go and have a gay time in the big city! . . . And they used to say that the trainmen couldn't understand them either, but they thumped their hip pocket and if they felt a snoose can or hit a snoose can they threw them off in Troy. See, they were Scandinavians."

The first Swedish immigrant in the Moscow area and Latah County was probably Martin Anderson who settled outside the present site of Moscow in 1872. This was just one year after the first permanent settlers had arrived. A year later he homesteaded farmland to the south of Moscow. By

the late 1870s several Swedes lived in the town, and many became businessmen. Oliver Peterson opened the first butcher shop in Moscow. Because of the numerous Swedes in Moscow, the area in eastern Moscow became known as Swedetown. Swedish customs and traditions found a place in Moscow because many of the young, unmarried Swedish women worked as domestic help in Moscow houses. This proved to be an advantage because they learned English and American customs. Many of the Swedish young women later married farmers and became prominent landowners.

The Swedish Lind-Nelson family who settled in Moscow in the 1886 are an example of how Swedes quickly adapted to small town life in the West. The Linds came to Moscow in 1886 to seek business opportunities after living in the Swedish community of Vista, Minnesota. Several residents of Vista later moved to Moscow. The Lind's daughter, Mary, worked as a nursemaid and hired girl for the Hannah family, and Mrs. Hannah who was Moscow's first music teacher, gave her music lessons. Mary Lind later worked for the Willis Sweet family, caring for their children and cooking dinners for guests. Her future husband, N. A. Nelson, and his brothers worked on a railroad line being built from Spokane to Kendrick, Idaho. He first settled near present-day Pasco, but did not like the desert and lack of a town nearby. He met Mary Lind when the crew was working near Moscow, and the Nelson brothers decided to stay and purchase homestead land. One brother returned to Sweden for his bride.

### *Children Taunted*

Although there was a large Swedish population in Moscow, they still were singled out. The Nelson's daughter, Elsie, remembers how the other school children taunted them:

"There was always a kid or two or three or four that called us 'Swede.' Oh, that was terrible, that just humiliated me. I didn't think any of the boys could feel that way, I thought it was just me, I was the oldest."

Her brother was called Whitey because of his extremely light-colored hair, which further identified him as a Swede. "It

bothered me terrible to think I had to be Swedish," Whitey confided to Elsie.

On the other hand, Swedes and Norwegians had the advantage of being able to easily understand each other. Some Germans who spoke low German were also able to understand these Scandanavian languages. Swedish and Norwegian children were usually pressured into learning English by other children and by school teachers. For example, the school teacher on Dry Ridge punished children who spoke their native languages.

The Linds, who were charter members of the Swedish Lutheran Church, celebrated Christmas much as they had done in Sweden. Elsie's mother, Mary Lind Nelson, like other Swedish housewives, thoroughly cleaned the house and baked special breads and a variety of candies and cookies. The Christmas season began on December 13th with the Day of Lucia, but Christmas eve was the main celebration, and gifts, generally hand-made, were exchanged. In 1893 when the nation was suffering from an economic depression, the Nelson family celebrated with simple presents of paper dolls cut from newspapers, apples and hand-made soap. On Christmas morning the family attended Jul Otta, the traditional early morning worship service. It began at six in the morning, and the family began walking to town when the sky was still dark. The church would be decorated with evergreen boughs and a beautiful Christmas tree.

### *Parties and Dancing*

The day after Christmas was reserved for visiting and parties of dancing and feasting with friends and relatives. The Christmas season lasted until January 13th when the Christmas tree was taken down.

Another important winter pastime for Swedish children was skiing on homemade skis. They were made from boards that had been boiled in a clothes boiler and then weighted on the ends to form a curve.

The foremost component of traditional life of Swedes and Norwegians was the Lutheran Church. Several of these churches were organized in the county soon after the immigrants arrived. In Latah County, the pioneer pastor Peter Carlson made the first

contacts with the Swedish immigrants, meeting with the Swedish settlers at Len-ville, a farming community south of Moscow. Among his words of advice he instructed them to have a peaceful attitude toward the Norwegian congregation in the community. Under his direction, the settlers organized the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Cordelia, eight miles southeast of Moscow.

### *Oldest Lutheran Church*

This was the first Swedish congregation in Idaho, and in 1883 they built the church on one acre of land donated by Andrew S. Olson. It is the oldest Lutheran church building in the state. The congregation later purchased an adjoining acre for a cemetery. Services were held continuously until 1920, and in 1948 the daughter of Andrew Olson donated funds to restore the building which had become dilapidated. It is now on the register of historic places.

The Moscow congregation, consisting of five families and two women, was organized in 1884, a year after the famous pioneer pastor, Peter Carlson, began missionary work in Moscow. The congregation was called the Swedish Evangelical Zion Congregation, and in 1886 they began a fund raising campaign for a church building. The first church and parsonage were built in 1888 through volunteer labor. When the congregation outgrew the church buildings, they constructed a new church in 1905 on land purchased from William J. McConnell, later governor of Idaho. A new parsonage was constructed in 1925. The Swedish Church had three active societies: The Ladies' Society, the Young People's Society, and the Willing Workers. Membership in 1905 was 288, and seventy-five children attended Sunday School. The original church building was moved to another location where it was used by the Norwegian Lutheran congregation. It was razed around 1930, but the 1905 church has been renovated and is now used by the Unitarian congregation. Services at both churches were in Swedish and Norwegian until the 1920s, and it was not until 1961 that the two Moscow churches merged as the Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

In addition to the Swedish and Norwegian Lutheran congregations, there was a

third sect, the Norwegian Hauge Synod established shortly after 1900, which held stricter beliefs. The Swedish and Norwegian Lutherans differed mainly in language. In Moscow the Swedish Lutherans became known as the First Lutheran Church, and the Norwegian Lutherans as United Lutheran and then Our Saviour Lutheran Church. The Hauge Synod group merged with the Norwegian Lutherans about 1930, and in 1961 the Swedish and Norwegians joined to become Emmanuel Lutheran.

### *Services in English*

Another change was to use English in the services which meant the loosening or loss of an ethnic association. Elsie Nelson remembered her father's attitude toward this change:

"My father was one of the first people to talk against having Swedish services and Norwegian services in two separate churches. When they started having their family he said, 'Why don't we convert this church into English services, because our kids can't understand a word of Swedish.' We didn't talk Swedish at home."

Pastor Peter Carlson organized other congregations in North Idaho and the Pacific Northwest, including the Westdala Lutheran Church east of Troy in 1886 and the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Salem Church in Spokane Falls in 1888. The Westdala Church was named for the Swedish provinces from which most of the congregation had come, Westergotland and Dalarna. The congregation met in homes until they built their church in 1891. In 1897 a splinter group formed the Swedish Mission Church (Nora Covenant church), east of Troy.

Several Latah County Swedes and Norwegians earned distinction and acquired considerable property. Charles Munson, a second-generation Swede, arrived in Moscow in 1884. In 1890 he bought a farm and entered politics. Munson was elected to the state legislature in 1898 and appointed Idaho's first State Land Commissioner in 1906. In that capacity he formed the first cooperative timber protective organizations in the state. Olof Olson arrived in Moscow in 1883, moved to Vollmer (former name of Troy) in 1891, and then became partner in the Vollmer Mercantile and Milling Com-

pany. Nels P. Pierson settled near Genesee in 1879 where he acquired 320 acres. He then bought another farm on Burnt Ridge east of Troy. Eli M. Johnson, arrived in Latah County in 1880, settling five miles north of Genesee on 215 acres. Axel and Ole Bohman, August Peterson, and Charles Freed (Frid) organized the Troy Lumber Company. From there they branched out to a large finishing mill and retail yard at Clarkston and a retail yard at Lewiston.

Norwegians were also numerous in Latah County, and worked as loggers and farmers. Like the Swedes, the Idaho Norwegian immigrants usually stopped in Wisconsin or Minnesota first. Palma Hanson Hove's father arrived in Genesee after working his way from Wisconsin to the Blue Mountains of south central Washington by logging and driving an oxen team to Walla Walla. Her father married her Norwegian mother in Genesee. The fertile Genesee area was settled very early, and many who arrived in the 1880s were unable to acquire land. The next choice of many of the Norwegians was the Troy area where homestead land was still available.

### *Family Selected Genesee*

Another Norwegian immigrant, John Eikum, left Norway in 1893 when he was five. The family selected Genesee because they knew others from their own district in Norway who were living there. These men wrote to the Eikums about opportunities in Genesee, and Mr. Eikum came first, then arranged for the rest of the family to come. They settled in the Cow Creek area which had 40 or 50 Norwegian families, each living on 40- and 80-acre farms. The land was open prairie and needed no clearing. Eikum's father had left Norway because of the heavy responsibilities of being the oldest son. His son explained, "And then he had to take care of his parents, his grandparents, and his great-grandparents. That's quite a load. And there wasn't much land he could farm, it was mostly grazing land."

There were two Lutheran churches just half a mile apart in the Cow Creek area of Genesee. The upper church was Our Saviours Lutheran Church and the lower church was the United Lutheran which was affiliated with the Missouri Synod. Members

of the congregations of each church avoided each other. It was less a matter of creed that differences between the two factions, according to Eikum. At one time the two churches had been united as the Lebanon Trinity Church. During the split the youth groups had programs of recitations and songs. By 1919 the churches had consolidated. One minister annually received \$150 and the crop from 40 acres of church land which the parishoners planted each spring. The congregation also gave two offerings for the minister at Christmas and Easter.

### ***Norwegian Holiday Celebrated***

The Norwegians in the Genesee area celebrated the 17th of May, the Norwegian Independence Day. For the 1904 celebration, a large crowd gathered at the H. C. Tweedt farm which the Genesee NEWS estimated at around 1,000 people. The Genesee band opened the program followed by patriotic addresses. Miss Hanna Aaland, dressed in a Norwegian costume, gave a recitation in Norwegian. A youth choir, the Genesee band, and Miller's orchestra furnished music throughout the program. In the afternoon the Cow Creek and Potlatch teams played baseball.

Among the Norwegians who settled American Ridge in Latah County was Edward Ramsdale whose family came from Ramsdale, Norway. He explained how the family left Norway in order to find better wages:

"We all heard about America, you, how they got rich over here, got big wages and all that. Everybody wanted to come here. And them days, there was lots of work here too, you know. They were even advertising back there for labor, you know, the railroads and the big logging companies and all that."

Ramsdale's uncle and brother and two Olson brothers left Norway around 1865, working in North Dakota and Superior, Wisconsin before arriving in Idaho. The Olson's encouraged him to come to the Troy area.

Edward Ramsdale traveled to Idaho in 1913 in an immigrant railroad train whose only passengers were immigrants. Not knowing English made the trip difficult, as

he explained:

"And then of course as they went they kept unloading, you know, till you finally got down to a few, like that car I was in. There was just two of us left, a girl and me. And I went over, I was wondering if I could talk to her, but I couldn't understand her . . . She was a Russian girl. And we just kind of laughed at each other." When the train reached Troy, "the conductor on the railroad, he came and put his hands on my shoulder, patting me on the shoulder, and said, 'This is it.' And even off the train, I could see he was walkin around me, he was tryin to find somebody that could talk my language. So he found a fellow by the name of Alfred Sundell down there, and Alfred, he took me up in town, he could talk, he was Swedish." His first impressions of the country was that it was big, hot and fertile.

### ***Parties in Winter***

The Norwegians on American Ridge enjoyed socializing, and during the winters there were parties and literaries in the schoolhouse. The Bethel Church was a center for the community. Farmers shared tasks like cutting ice, harvesting, and butchering in the fall.

Another small Norwegian settlement was at Park in eastern Latah County. There were six Norwegian families and one French Canadian family when Edward Swenson's parents arrived in 1891 from Minnesota. Park was very isolated and farming was difficult. Swenson's father worked in the Genesee Valley during the harvest, and the family cut native grass in Park for hay for the cattle. During the winter they fed moss to the livestock.

***(NOTE: This essay is from the overview of Idaho's Northern European Americans which is included in the report, "Idaho's Ethnic Heritage," produced by the Idaho Ethnic Heritage Project in March 1990. It was co-sponsored by the Idaho Centennial Commission and the Idaho State Historical Society. The project co-directors and editors were Laurie Mercier and Carole Simon-Smolinski.)***

## Bibliographical Notes

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Because of Latah County's high percentage of Scandinavian immigrants, it is not surprising that the Swedes and Norwegians are well-represented in the Historical Society's oral history collection. This article

relied on information and quotations from transcripts of interviews with Carl Olson, 1973; Willa Cummings Carlson, 1974; Edward Swenson, 1974; William Burkland, 1976; Helen Cartwright Carlson, 1975; Palma Hanson Hove, 1975; John Eikum, 1975, and Edward Ramsdale, 1975. Information on the Freed (Frid) family was provided by Alice Freed in her typescript history of the family, "In Memory of . . .," 1987. Elsa Nelson's autobiography, *Today is Ours*, is another valuable source on Swedish life in Latah County, particularly Swedish customs. Both of these sources are at the Latah County Historical Society. Also see Denise S. May's manuscript, "Swedish Family Life in Moscow", at the University of Idaho Library. For information on the establishment and growth of the Scandinavian immigrant churches, see Roger Pettenger, "Highlights in the History of the Cordelia Lutheran Church," typescript, 1989; "First Lutheran Church, 60th Anniversary," souvenir program, Oct. 1945; and, "Conference Dedication of New Church," souvenir program of the Columbia Conference, 1906, copies at the Latah County Historical Society.

### THE PRICE OF A DREAM

*From Sweden he came, my grandfather,  
A young lad of sixteen with a vision of  
Homesteading in Northern Idaho, creating  
A home for his sweetheart left behind  
Across the sea. Landed in New York; he and  
His brother were told: "Too many Johnsons  
Today -- you'll be called Olson!"  
Gave up his name for his dream.  
He cleared the land, built his home facing  
Moscow Mountain; went back to fetch his love,  
But found he was too late.  
Lost his love for his dream.  
Heavy of heart, he crossed that great ocean  
Again; met someone on board willing to share  
His dream; married when they landed.  
Together they carved a new life,  
Raised a family, farmed the land.  
Etched a memory of time.*

--Sandy Town Lytle

## Two Black Families in Latah County

# Contribute an Important Legacy

By Mary E. Reed

Although few Blacks or African American people settled in Latah County either temporarily or permanently, two families did leave an important legacy through their contributions to the county and their individual characteristics: the Wells and the Settles.

The story of Joe and Lou Wells and their sons who ran a half-way house near present-day Deary is fairly well-known. John Miller in his book, *The Trees Grew Tall*, describes the family who came from North Carolina with the Wells brothers, Grant and Crom, in 1889. The Wells treated Joe as an equal, and when they came West Joe and his wife, Lou followed. The Wells, who were the first Black family in Latah County, first settled along Pine Creek where Joe first worked as a blacksmith. The Well's built a home, and across the road a log school house was named the Wells school. Joe's favorite joke was that he was the only white man in the county; the rest were Swedes. Joe also worked as an independent, "gyppo" logger with his two sons Roy and Chuck. The Wells had a daughter named Mary.

Eugene Settle, another well-known Black person in the county, worked for Joe Wells in logging operations with a crew of around six. He swamped, and Chuck and Joe did the skidding. Eugene remembered that the Wells owned horses as good as those the Potlatch Company owned. And they preferred working in the woods to settling down on a farm:

"They were a different type of people than my folks. They were hard workers and they were hard drinkers. And my family wasn't that type. [The Wells] made good money and they throwed it away . . . he had a chance of being a rich outfit, but they just blew it. They made good money and they

could have bought good land cheap at that time when they was in there, you know, good farm out on the ridge . . . But they stayed in the woods. They made good money in the woods if they'd have saved it. But they made it and they spent it . . . Yes, they liked Old Joe up there, sure they do. You bet. Well, I guess he had a heart as big as a hotel, as far as that part's concerned. And Old Lou, I liked her, she was just a good old soul."

Eugene also remembered the popular half-way house the family ran: "They had a big house at that time, and people going up in the white pine district would stay all night there or stopped there and get a meal, in the early days. Old Wells was known far and wide. He helped build some of these brick buildings here in Moscow and Colfax (Washington), too."

Like Joe Wells, Eugene Settle's father was persuaded to come to the Pacific Northwest by a white man, this time his employer

who was a teamster in Arkansas:

"Well, I'll tell you, now that is one reason that brought my father out West. 'Cause this old man that he worked for there in Fort Smith, Arkansas, he told my dad in their conversation, he said, 'I think that'd be a good place for you. You're a young man, you're raising a family and as far as I could see when I was out there, there's very little prejudice out in that part of the country.'"

After selling his cattle and horse, Mr. Settle shipped the family furniture on a railroad car to Bluestem, Washington. While on a stopover in Moscow, Mr. Chrisemon, a Black man who ran a restaurant, tried to persuade Mr. Settle to stay. Chrisemon was the only black businessman in Moscow, and his step-daughter Jennie Hughes was the first black student to graduate from the University of Idaho. Chrisemon even offered to rent land to him, and then he gave Eugene's father his address in case he changed his mind. But his father wanted

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". . . there's very little prejudice out in that part of the country."

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to homestead, which he did after finding a homestead cabin on Crab Creek near present Bluestem, Washington. He went to work for a stockman, but after hard times he returned to Moscow to find a place to farm. At this time there was just one other Black family in town, the McCrae's who ran a restaurant.

For the first two or three years, Eugene's father first rented land from Bill Buchanan, and then he was able to buy his own land near Joel. He made enough money to pay off all of his debts and to buy 80 acres of timbered land. He also rented other land, and he got started in the horse business by trading for five wild horses which he had broken. Soon afterward the family was able to accumulate some cattle and to buy their own farm machinery, and they made extra money by raising and selling strawberries and raspberries in Moscow. Mr. Settle also ran a custom hay baling operation around the country and baled straw for the universities.

### ***Friends Help Out***

When his father became sick, the seven-year-old Eugene had to stay out of school to do the farm work. The family found they had many friends. In the spring all the neighbors came and donated a day's work to plow the family's field. Eugene continued: "And then the next winter he got rheumatism again and when spring come he wasn't able to do no work and he had a lot of that place to put in, spring crop, it wasn't even plowed. And then the neighbors all over the country came in with teams and plows and gave him a day's work there and they pretty near put that place in that one day, there was so many fellows come over to help him . . . There was teams from all over."

Another time when the family was sick in the flu epidemic, the neighbors helped them with their crops and fed their animals. In 1911 the Settles found another place to lease.

Eugene remembered how the neighbors felt about his father:

". . . I don't hardly think he [got a bad time because he was black]. He wasn't that type of a man . . . he was a likeable man and he was a kind man, he was a good man, he was an honest man. His word was

good as gold. And so it just seemed like he blended in with the neighbors, the people he traded with."

Eugene's parents were devout Baptists and believed strongly in education. They moved closer to Moscow so that their children could attend high school or business college. Eugene had to struggle to complete his education. Because his family needed his help, he had to stay out of school two years after he completed the eighth grade. He graduated from the business department of the Moscow High School in 1914 as a junior and then continued on in order to get enough credits to go to college. But he was drafted into the army before he could finish. He completed correspondence courses with the intention of entering the civil service. When he was offered a job as a mail clerk on the railroad, his wife persuaded him to farm instead of accepting a job that would take him away from home for long periods of time.

There was another reason why Eugene decided to continue farming. After he finished high school and took a business course in commercial bookkeeping, he tried several places in Moscow to get a job, but had no luck:

"Course, I don't remember many of the kids in my class that did get any . . . 'Course they didn't tell me it was on account of my color, but they just told me they didn't have anything for me. There was some people thought that I was so well-known around Moscow that I might have a pretty good chance of getting a job. But I didn't get anything."

### ***Decided to Quit Farming***

During the Depression, Eugene decided to quit farming because he couldn't get out of debt even though he was working at other jobs in addition to farming. The Lewiston Bank that had sold him the farm wanted him to stay with it, offering to give him a mortgage on everything, including the farm machinery, and promising to take care of the debts.

After working in a grain warehouse, the manager of the Latah County Grain Growers hired him as warehouse superintendent, promoting him above others who had worked there longer. He worked at the job



for 16 years and had as many as 25 or 30 men working for him during the busiest months. He did all the firing and hiring. Because of his experience as a sergeant in the army Eugene knew how to handle men.

Although Moscow was not like towns in the South, prejudice against Blacks did exist. Gene recalled that although Moscow restaurants served black railroad workers in the 1940s, some acted like they would prefer not to. On a personal basis, Gene's experiences were mainly positive. When he started high school in Moscow, he was the only Black in the school system:

### **Was Popular Student**

"Well, of course, the first morning I went to school, all the eyes was focused on me, naturally. That I expected . . . And it seems like as soon as the kids found out that I walked and talked and breathed just the same as they did, why, then it wasn't long before I got to be a very popular student in the Moscow High School. They invited me out for track and I did pretty well in football . . . Of course, there was always some kind of stand back, but there was so many more that I never noticed it, so I got along real good in school here. And always have in Moscow here."

In fact, Eugene set a school record at Moscow High School with a five-minute mile in track.

He faced few prejudices as a young-

ster, and the Settle farm was a meeting place for other kids. The only Blacks Eugene knew as a boy were the people who worked for his father on his farm. From his parents talking about the south the Settle boys knew there was a color barrier even though their personal contacts with Blacks were very limited:

"I never had very much association with black people outside of my family, very little until after I went in the army . . . you take my folks had a few black friends in Spokane that came down and visited 'em . . . I went to Spokane quite a little bit and after I met this girl, I used to go up there on Sundays, we'd go out together. Just before the war, my wife's brother, she had two brothers they lived up at Oakesdale then, and they came up there and they had a black fellow working for 'em. He had an aunt up there and this aunt of his gave a party for the boys out of town. So I went out there and that's the only party I was ever to, young black people up there. And, of course, when I was in the service I met quite a few of the boys from Spokane at Camp Lewis, because we all went there, all the first from Spokane and we didn't get separated until we went to Kansas City."

*(This information is based on six oral history interviews with Eugene Settle, a Black who made Moscow his home. The interviews were conducted from June 3, 1975, to August, 1978.)*

### **Bibliographical Essay**

The articles on Latah County's Scandinavians and Eastern Europeans are excerpted from the two overviews that were part of a project on Idaho's ethnic heritage. Laurie Mercier and Carole Simon-Smolinski co-directed the project and edited the several overviews and resource guide. The other researchers were Bobbi Jo Rahder and Mary Reed. The Idaho Centennial Commission and the Idaho State Historical Society provided the funding. The project's goals were to investigate and identify sources and then to summarize existing information about the many ethnic groups who came to Idaho from all over the world.

An attempt was made to investigate the experiences of more ordinary people who have largely been ignored or undervalued in works on Idaho's ethnic past. Although the lives of notable figures such as Chief Joseph, Moses Alexander, and Polly Bemis are well-documented, those of laborers, loggers, homesteaders, and operators of family businesses generally have not.

The overviews, which describe over 40 historical and contemporary ethnic groups, were based on a survey of available sources in libraries, historical societies, and private collections throughout the state. It is hoped that the eight overviews and the accompanying resource guide which resulted from the project will create a greater awareness of the contributions of the many, diverse cultures as well as serve as the basis for further studies.

The Latah County Historical Society served as one of the resources for the ethnic heritage project. Its extensive oral history collection, most of which has been transcribed, and the large and well-catalogued library collection yielded valuable information about various ethnic groups in the county.

These materials also served as the basis for the 1990 exhibit, "Coming Home to Latah County: A Heritage of Many Peoples," and the slide program, "A Great Good Country." We hope that these two projects, which were produced for Idaho's Centennial, and the essays in this issue will serve to encourage greater awareness of the diversity of people and cultures in this part of Idaho.

## Oriental Immigrants Find Acceptance as

# Chinese in Business in Moscow

By Mary E. Reed

Much of the evidence of early Chinese people in Latah County has disappeared, as it was never recorded in an accurate or systematic way. We know that the Chinese worked on railroad crews, in mines, in hotels and restaurants. They worked as household servants, operated laundries and restaurants, and raised and sold produce throughout the region. Because of these various roles and contributions to county's economy, it is surprising that records about their lives and occupations are so sparse. In fact, until recently the Latah County Historical Society did not have one photograph of Chinese among its collection of thousands of images.

Much of what we do know about the Chinese in Latah County is due to the meticulous research of Univeristy of Idaho anthropologist Priscilla Wegars, whose article on the Chinese work force in the Moscow vicinity from 1880 to 1910 appeared in the fall and winter 1986 issues of *Latah Legacy*. In addition, the Latah County Historical Society's oral history collection contains four valuable interviews with the Mi and Marie Lew which shed light on the experiences of second generation Chinese. Unlike most of the Chinese in Latah County, Mi and Marie Lew came to Moscow to stay. Their accounts of family, schooling, and town life provide an invaluable document of what it meant to be of this ethnic group in the early and middle decades of the 20th century.

Both Mi and Marie were born in China, Mi in 1905 and Marie in 1910. Mi grew up in Walla Walla, and remembers most of the Chinese there. They numbered around 300 and were almost all men; there were only two Chinese women. Most of the Chinese men had formerly worked on the railroad, and after it was completed they turned to gardening, raising vegetables to sell locally. The Chinese who came to the

region sometimes brought their sons with them, as it was easier for them to take care of boys than girls. In addition, the Chinese government opposed allowing women to leave the country.

Mi's father worked on railroads for many years, and succeeded in saving around \$600. His father then returned to China where he married a woman younger than himself, and then returned to the United States without his wife but with his son Mi. Mi entered the United States as a "merchant's son," and the reason his family immigrated was in order to give him an opportunity to attend school.

Mi was the oldest son and the first Chinese child in Walla Walla. About eight or ten years later, there were around 40 boys in the city. Walla Walla had a large Chinese popluation at the time, and there were more Chinese people in Walla Walla than in Spokane. In Spokane, the Chinese worked in restaurants and had to know some English; in Walla Walla most had truck gardens which they worked in common on a cooperative basis. They rented the land because it was illegal for Chinese to own property.

In these cooperative enterprises, people worked and ate together and divided the harvest. Mi remembers that the Chinese in Walla Walla were accustomed to working seven days a week, 12 to 14 hours a day in the truck garden. They often cultivated 40 acres but the larger farms were over 100 acres. They sold their produce in Walla Walla to Pacific Fruit and Walla Walla Produce. Mi's family had a small horse cart and from it they peddled vegetables house to house, often to regular customers.

Mi recalled this practice taking place in Lewiston as well:

"It wasn't too many years ago that the Chinese man with two big baskets had vegetables. He peddled from house-to-house. With a pole on the shoulder, goes up and

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They rented the land because it was illegal for Chinese to own property.

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down the street."

As a school boy, Mi worked as a domestic for a man who sold insurance. Having a Chinese servant was a status symbol. His various jobs included tending the furnace, taking out the ashes, and chopping wood. At the time he did not know any English, and in Walla Walla many school teachers and churches helped Chinese children learn English in the evening with special classes.

Marie Lee Lew came to the United States in 1920 when she was 10 years old. Her father had studied herbal medicine and became an herb doctor. He was only 20 years old when he first came to the United States. Later he had a business in Spokane on north Wall Street selling herbal medicines to the railroad workers. This was one of two herbal stores in the city. Chinese merchants worked in partnerships, buying stock from merchant ships and reselling the merchandise to stores.

### ***Fearful of Strange Land***

When Marie's father returned to China for his wife and daughter, he found Marie's mother reluctant to come to United States. She was fearful of leaving all her friends, father and mother, sisters and brothers to go to a strange land where she did not know the language. Marie recalled:

"When she come over here all she have is my father. She have to depend on my father. There is only one person that can take care of her, and if he happened to be cruel and leave her, well she be out. But if she's in China she still have her father and mother, at least a place where she can go home."

Marie's father proved to be a good husband and father. In fact, Marie was one of the first Chinese girls who were allowed to go to College because her father believed in educating girls as well as boys. In Chinese culture, men have a predominant role in making decisions.

As Marie pointed out, "Like they say, a woman when they're born they listen to their father, when they marry, they listen to their husbands, when they get older, they listen to their sons."

Marie's parents bought the restaurant in Moscow in 1926, and she entered high

school in 1926, graduating in 1929. She studied Home Economics with the intention of becoming a teacher. It was sometimes difficult:

"For years we were the only Chinese family in Moscow. And I was the only Chinese girl in high school. My sisters were in grade school."

After high school Marie attended the University of Idaho for two years while her future husband Mi was a student at Washington State University. Marie was the only Chinese woman at the University, and there were only two or three at Washington State University and the same number of Japanese women students. The prejudice against Chinese students restricted Marie's social life.

### ***School Was for Learning***

As she explained, "Well, I never went out. I was pretty well kept at home during my grade school and high school years and in college years I was still staying home, under the supervision of my mother and father. And, being Chinese, I just go to school to go to school; to learn. And besides I have to spend some time in work, too, to help the folks out."

Mi had returned to China in 1929 to look at prospects for an engineering career, but he returned to Moscow in 1931. Mi faced serious problems caused by the beginning of the Japanese-Chinese War in Asia and discrimination against Chinese in the United States.

When Mi went on field trips with his schoolmates he was not allowed to sit in the same place in the movies . . . as they were and he was not allowed to get a hair cut at certain places where his schoolmates were allowed to have haircuts . . . He didn't say very much about discrimination against him, but he did feel very badly about that.

"All the other schoolmates on these field trips were able to buy a ticket and go to a show but he could not sit with them. He bought the same ticket and paid the same price, but he could not sit with them. He had to be segregated in a different section of the theater." This was at college, somewhere between 1926 to 1929.

While in high school, Mi found that taking Reserved Officers Training (ROTC)

helped him win acceptance." Mi described it as a good experience "because I had ROTC clothes to wear. Then I got clothes just the same as they have. Everybody the same in uniform, in other words."

Mi and Marie married in 1931, and they took over the restaurant from Marie's parents in 1932. The parents sold it to Mi and Marie because the parents wanted to take the younger children back to China to give them a little bit of Chinese culture when they were still young. When the Japanese-Chinese war began they sent the two younger children, who had been born in the United States and were therefore citizens, back to live with Mi and Marie. Marie finished her university studies in 1933.

Running the restaurant during the depression was difficult. The Lews had an extra cook and one or two waitresses. Although they were not always able to pay wages, their employees stayed on because there were no other jobs. Finally the Lew's were able to pay all their back wages. Chinese food was not popular until after the Second World War. To make a living, Chinese restaurants had to serve more food, better prepared, and for less money than other restaurants. This meant that the Lews had to work up to 16 hours daily and the whole family helped. The Lew children started helping in the restaurant as soon as they were able to do a task like peeling onions.

### ***Chinese Organized Club***

Because of discrimination against them, the Chinese living in the Palouse organized their own social club.

"At that time the Chinese girls and boys didn't have too much social life with the American people. But we did have what we called the Cosmopolitan Club. It included Chinese and Filipino boys and girls. Reverend Drury from Presbyterian Church was with the Cosmopolitan Club. He was interested in foreign students as well as other professors who sponsored the club."

At club meetings the members discussed school work, but very little politics because they had no vote. The Cosmopolitan Clubs of both universities often held joint meetings, picnics and hikes on Moscow

Mountain.

With some exceptions, the Lew's found acceptance among Moscow residents and businesses:

"And I think everybody in Moscow has treated my family and me and now my husband and I well . . . And they were friendly to us . . . We just have a few friends that we like to entertain in our own home and we go to our friends' homes and we just enjoy ourself that way. And business-wise, I think we have been treated very well in Moscow. Well, there's always one or two exceptions . . . Whenever we need anything...we are all well treated . . . All the churches in Moscow have been very friendly with us. The Historical women have been good to me, and the Senior Citizens, we get along very well with them, you know. So as far as I know, none of my family around here has ever been ill-treated by anybody."

### ***Raised 'Modern Way'***

Like other immigrant families, the Lew's raised their children in a modern way.

"And most of my friends in town here or around me are American people, so I see what they're doing. And our children go play with other children, too, and they have contact with more American people than Chinese people, so I think they're raised more in the American tradition than the Chinese."

While encouraging their children to accept American culture and tradition, the Lews have maintained contact with Chinese friends. They know all the Chinese restaurant people in Lewiston, Pullman, Colfax, Othello and Moses Lake, and they are invited to weddings, receptions, and dinners of their Chinese friends.

"And so, you know, all our friends when their daughters or sons marry, if there is a big wedding and a big dinner, all the people around here are invited. But the thing is, most of these around Moscow are all Eng's and we're the only Lews, but we were very glad that we were invited to all the Eng's affairs, anyway."

Marie's father, Yee Lee, bought Huff's Cafe on the corner of Second and Main Streets. Later he bought the Grill Cafe on Main Street where Biscuitroot Park is now located. Mi and Marie moved the Grill Cafe

to 214 South Main between Second and Third Streets. They retired in 1970 and sold the restaurant. It is now the New Hong Kong Cafe.

*(This information is taken from four*

*interviews with Mi Lew and Marie Lee Lew, former restaurant owners in Moscow. The interviews were conducted November and December 1975, and January and October 1976.)*

## **Hands Across the Border . . .**

*(The following remarks were made at the dedication of the Friendship Grove at the State Line between Moscow and Pullman September 1, 1989)*

By now everyone should know that our states and universities are caught up in a whirl of centennial celebrations. On this wonderful vantage point and from a perspective of 100 years of friendship and cultural and economic ties, we are creating a lasting legacy. This is Centennial Friendship Grove, planted with native trees and shrubs. As we look out on the backdrop of fields and the Idaho mountains, let's take a moment to reflect on all the people who have crossed back and forth over this artificial line - this political boundary between our two states.

The first people who traveled between the two states were the Native Americas who dug camas root on the meadows and fished and hunted in the Idaho mountains. The Palouse river and region is named for one of their villages, and the word "Latah" combines two Nez Perce words for the large pine trees in the area and the stone pestle used for grinding the camas root.

The first white settlers who arrived here in the 1860s moved their cattle from winter pastures along the Snake to summer bunch grass on these rolling hills. The ranchers and farmers used ferries and steamboat landings in Whitman County along the Snake River to ship out harvests. They also depended on Latah County's forests for lumber and fuel.

There were other times of cooperation and competition. The Washington town of Palouse supplied grub stakes for miners in the Idaho Hoodoo mountains, while the new Idaho lumber town of Potlatch bought out sawmills in Palouse and Colfax and dismantled them. Both of our universities share a common history in that they were located in Moscow and Pullman as a way of keeping northern Idaho and eastern Washington happy. Before 1890 northern Idaho was thinking about becoming part of eastern Washington. Some even wanted to create a new state of Columbia which would encompass our two counties. The fact that this strategy of placing the University of Idaho at Moscow and Washington State University at Pullman succeeded is why we are celebrating two state centennials instead of one.

In the era before modern highways and shopping malls, sister towns of Genesee and Uniontown, Moscow and Pullman, and Potlatch and Palouse enjoyed trading with each as they often took turns hosting Fourth of July celebrations. Residents used the railroads to visit each other as easily as we now commute between Moscow and Pullman. City bands, baseball teams and clubs were frequent visitors in each other's towns. They paid little attention to whether they were in Washington or Idaho.

The people of these two counties have much in common. Farmers own land stretching on both sides of the state line. Residents of Moscow and Pullman have toll-free telephone service. Our artists, musicians, writers, historians and other experts freely share their talents with residents of both counties and both states. And, all of us are thinking and working toward expanding this spirit of cooperation to make maximum use of all our natural and human resources. One project that will help us become closer neighbors is the bike path between Pullman and Moscow. The results will be an even richer variety of educational, cultural and athletic activities that provide county residents and our university students with unique opportunities to enjoy the quality of big city life in a small town environment. We who live in this corner of the Pacific Northwest with two universities only ten miles apart are truly blessed.

Mary Reed, Chair, Latah County Centennial Committee (Idaho)  
Ed Gerretson, Chair, Whitman County Centennial Committee (Washington)

## Diary of a Viola Settler 1875-1884

The following are excerpts from a diary written by Elmer P. Palmer from 1873 to 1884. His family left Columbia, Nebraska, in the fall of 1873 and spent almost two years in the Beaverton, Oregon, area and Penewawa, Washington, before settling in Viola, then known as Palouse Bridge. The three entries following were written after their arrival in Viola.

Elmer was born in 1854. His father, Asher H. Palmer and his uncle Charles Wesley Palmer served with the Seventh Cavalry when the Mullan Road was built. They traveled through the Latah County area in the mid-1850s, and at that time Asher Palmer planted apple seeds near Viola.

The transcript is part of the Oral History Project of the Latah County Museum Society. The manuscript also is in the Special Collections of the University of Idaho Library.

Note that the transcript is reproduced as written by the author.

*Memoranda*  
*Palouse Bridge*  
*July 25, 1875*

*First shour scince we came from Walla Walla about two weeks ago and now it is only going to rain enough for a big dew in some countries*

*And the rain which fell about two weeks ago amounted to only about as much Now I am in a great hurry and would like to write like lightning or some other thing which goes fast and say innumerable things which any one would who goes on inspiration and immotion*

*When we went to Walla Walla it was cold weather and when we got to Snake river we were not used to so much heat and liked to have rosted Well we did stand it and when we got home we found it had been as hot here as where we had been*

*Crops look good and are looking much like they were going to be heavy I am going to try to write a story and offer it for publication Its title will be My Love Song*

*Memoraanda*  
*Mar. 10, 1884*  
*Viola*

*Scince my last memoranda there has been very much change in our country*

*The name of our Post Office has been changed first to Four mile and now as above to Viola*

*We have a little town on the South and West*

*Joining our place*

*The town consists of Seven families including One Hotell and two boarding houses two saloons or Jin mills and two Stores Planeing Mill and Blacksmith shop*

*We have a nice Schoolhouse and good school Regular preaching once in a month*

*We have about Two hundred and fifty acres of land paid for and fenced About One hundred and Seventy five under cultivation Balance of two Government claims in fractions unfenced*

*The past Winter has not gone yet as about there was about six inches of snow fill last night.*

*The ground has been frozen nearly all of the time since the tenth of last December but there has been but little good sleighing and in fact not much snow has laid on the ground. The water started to run in the creeks about Christmas but there was not much untill the middle of February when we had a big Chinuke but since then it has been fine weather during the day but it froze nearly every knight*

*Harriet my sister is living with us has two children Arthur and Lilly They are keeping two cows two calves and two cayouses hare this winter. They lived with Old Knight Harriet's husband las Summer.*

*Memoranda*  
*March 24, 1884*  
*Viola*

*Is a fine day Marc Riggs comeses breaking for me to day frost is very nearly all out of the ground but lots of snow drifts yet. Some mens teams have been runing most of last week but I do not mean to croud the season very much.*

*I have better health now than for a long time last June I worked too hard and since then have been laid up with a fever (?) sore on my arm But it looks like it wis going to get well now*

*It is four o'clock as fine a spring evening as we have had for a year Artie Fauver comes up from school and is making much noise. We have Seven Cows giveing milk. only Three Young Calves. Have already Two young colts expect Six more do not expect any more calves*

*Sister Harriet is here yet The children going to school*

*The young Grass is comensing to look green but the sod is very soft and tender*

*People are begining to stir some but are Our apple trees are looking first rate but the pears are not any of them alive and more than half of the grafted plumbtrees are either dead or looking bad*

*We expect a good many Apples this year And we may have some blumbs, the freeze that hurt our Orchard was last winter and it is some satisfaction that it was not alone in this country but in Walla Walla as well so we still have good curage to go a head in taking care of our Orchard.*

*We are expecting to put in a good crop of wheat*

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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. Subscriptions 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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Privileges are identical for all classes; the highest 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 local history/genealogy research archives 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 Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to Noon and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday hours are from 1 to 5 p.m. Visits to the museum or research archives at other times can be arranged by calling (208) 882-1004.