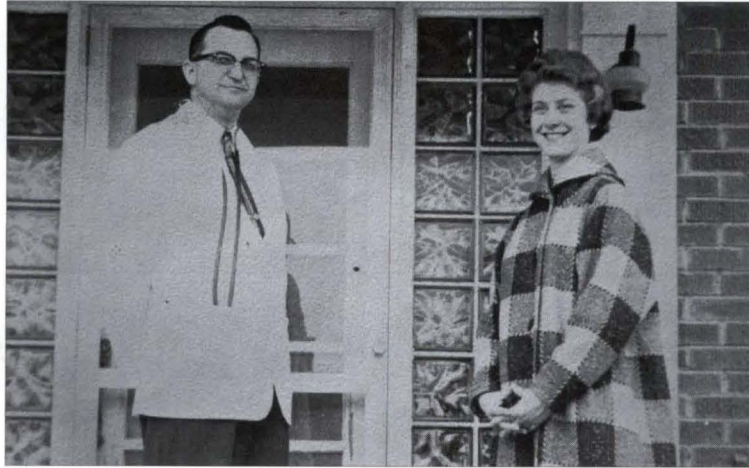




LATAH LEGACY



When Moscow Hosted the Air Circus
Moscow Women's Social Clubs, 1892–2010
To Get a Doctor to Practice in a Small Town: A Cooperative Approach
One Brick at a Time



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by Brian Magelky

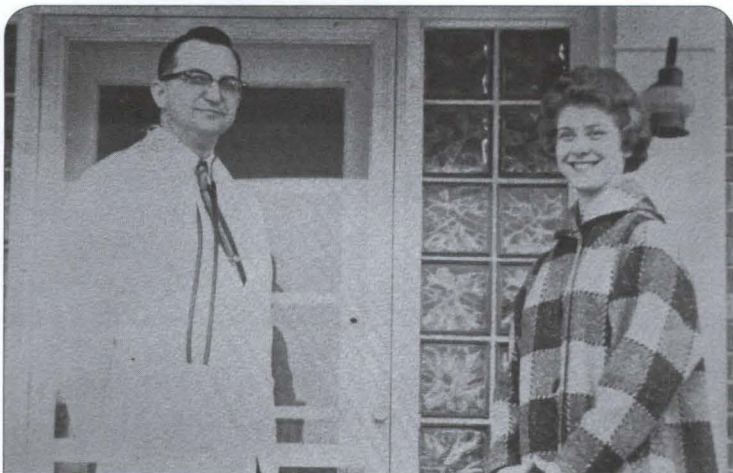
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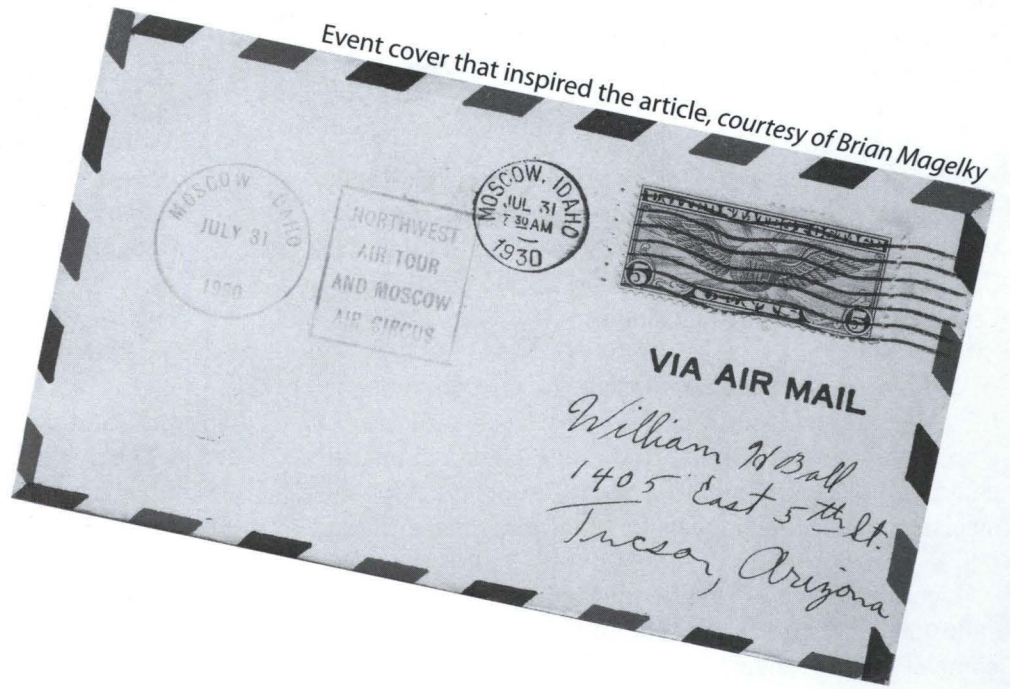
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Tex Rankin and Dorothy Hester, *courtesy of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society*

Event cover that inspired the article, courtesy of Brian Magelky



When Moscow Hosted
the
Air Circus

by Brian Magelky

On July 31, 1930, the serene skies over Moscow were pierced by the roar of a red and white Great Lakes biplane. At the controls was a 19-year-old Portland, Oregon, daredevil known as “Princess Kick-a-Hole-in-the-Sky.” Dorothy Hester was performing a stunt that no other woman in the world did—the Outside Loop.

An Outside Loop is done by flying level, then diving and completing a loop with the canopy of the plane pointing out of the loop. Quite a stunt considering the open cockpits on the planes they flew in those days. This maneuver was

considered a fatal maneuver, due to the negative G forces on the pilot and the plane, until James H. (Jimmy) Doolittle accomplished the feat in 1927. (The same Jimmy Doolittle who achieved WWII fame.)

Dorothy Hester’s stunts were part of the Northwest Air Tour and Moscow Air Circus. The NW Air Tour of 1930 was similar to other “reliability tours” that traveled the US during the 1920s and 30s. The tours were first undertaken to show the reliability of automobiles, but then adapted to promote the fledgling air transportation business. The Tour

was designed as a 10-day tour of 22 cities in Washington, Idaho and Oregon. Moscow was the only Idaho location chosen. Original estimates were that 50 planes would take part in the tour. However, 34 planes departed Spokane for the show in Moscow.

Sharing the Tour with Dorothy Hester was Tex Rankin, a well-known stunt pilot from Portland and the man who taught Dorothy to fly. Gordon Mounce, Dick Rankin, Jack Cox, Bill Young, Ben Easley, Dudley Steele, Edith Foltz and Frank Brooks were also included.

At the time, the Pullman-Moscow Airport was one of the finest airport facilities in the area. To secure the Tour stop, the Moscow Chamber of Commerce had to put up a guarantee of several hundred dollars, supply fuel for the airplanes, and furnish meals for the flyers during their stay.

Once the Moscow Chamber of Commerce decided to sponsor the Tour, a host of committees was formed to complete the arrangements for the tour. Howard Staples, as chairman of the airport committee of the chamber, was in general charge. Assisting him were fellow airport committee members H. S. Ruddach, Frank Bumgarner, Malcolm Neely and Howard Short. Specific committees included:

Field Arrangements: George Bloor, Carl Smith, J. H. Rearden, and Captain B. M. Crenshaw.

Entertainment: Clyde Marsh, Adolph Green, and Harold Cornelison.

Tickets: Lawrence Huff, Lee Gregory, Frank Bumgarner, Allen Ramstedt, Malcolm Neely, Elmer Anderson and Clinton Bohman.

Policing of Grounds: Harry A. Brenn and Gerald Hodgins.

Publicity: Earl David, L. A. Boas, J. F. Montgomery, B. C. Rowe, and Jack Wade.

Several thousand spectators were expected for the event. The publicity committee had large circulars printed and either mailed or taken to every house within an area bounded by Elk River on the east, Colfax on the west, Oakesdale on the north and Genesee on the south. A total population of 32,000 was reached with the advertising. The ticket committee sponsored a ticket sales contest to boost sales. Any young man or young woman who sold at least \$15.00 worth of tickets was promised a free 25-mile airplane ride. A total of 50 seats for plane rides were available. Howard Staples, quoted in the *Moscow Daily Star-Mirror*, promised no dust at the airstrip. Two large tanks had been procured and would water the runways the night before and again on the morning of the Tour. The tanks would also provide free ice water for attendees.

Dorothy Hester, Stunt Pilot

Until the day she looked down and saw Portland from the air, Dorothy Hester was thinking she might become a nun, or maybe a dancer. Her first ride in an airplane changed all her dreams. Dorothy was born in 1910 and grew up in Portland, Oregon, one of five sisters. After her mother died in 1919 Dorothy learned quickly to take care of herself and by age 17 she was parachuting at local air shows to pay for flight lessons at the Rankin School of Flying in Portland. Piloting a plane came naturally for her; she was relaxed, confident, and smooth at the controls.

Her flight instructor was John G. "Tex" Rankin, who traveled across the country presenting exciting air shows and performing breath-taking aerobatic stunts. Impressed by Dorothy's progress in flight school, he asked his star student to join him on the tours and she accepted the invitation. For the tours the makers of the Great Lakes Sport Trainer gave her a new model to fly, a biplane she described as "quick and fast, a real sweetie." Though she was well aware of the possibility of a serious or fatal accident, she never worried about it.

On tour her stage name was Princess-Kick-a-Hole-in-the-Sky and the death-defying Outside Loop was her game. Cockpits were open in those days and the plane flew in a vertical or upside down position for most of each loop, with the harnessed pilot hanging in the cockpit on the outside of the loop. The force of gravity was extreme for both pilot

and plane. On May 17, 1931, Dorothy flew 69 continuous outside loops in just over two hours at an air show in Omaha, Nebraska. The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) recognized 62 of the loops as perfectly formed, and Dorothy was awarded a women's record. That record stood until 1989 when another female stunt pilot, in a modern closed cockpit complete with stereo headset, performed 208 outside loops.

Princess-Kick-a-Hole-in-the-Sky did not limit herself to flying outside loops. Another of her many stunts was the inverted snap roll in which she flew her plane upside down and then suddenly did a 360-degree roll, a move which could tear the wings from a plane if not done smoothly. Just days before the Omaha air show she flew 56 snap rolls and established a record for both men and women, a record that was still standing when she was inducted into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame in 2000. Fox Movietone News had put a camera in the cockpit to film one of her snap rolls, but the film was never shown to movie audiences. Editors were afraid viewers would get too dizzy.

Dorothy flew with Tex Rankin's air shows from 1931 to 1934 and also established a flight school in Cornelius, Oregon, during that time. She gave up both the tours and the school after she married in 1934 and devoted herself to raising her two daughters. She let her pilot's license expire but flew with a friend on occasion until her death in 1991.



Tex Rankin with his plane, *courtesy of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society*

The air show was broken into two parts. The morning session would run from 10:00 am to noon, and the afternoon session would run from 1:30 to 3:00 pm. The 10:00 am start time would allow the planes to travel from Spokane, where they were spending the night of July 30th. The 3:00 pm end time would allow the planes to travel to Clarkston, Washington, where they would spend the night of the 31st.

The show did not go exactly as planned. The planes, 22 of them, arrived at the airport just before noon. The late arrival was blamed on a time mistake. One or two stragglers came in about one o'clock. Four planes turned east from Palouse, mistaking that town for Pullman, and ended up at Bovill. Four other pilots, Dick Rankin, Jack Cox, Bill Young, and Ben Easley, missed Moscow altogether and ended up in Clarkston. By then, it was too late to come back for the show.

However, those that made it to the Pullman-Moscow Airport thrilled the crowd. Barrel rolls, upside down flying, tail spins, inside loops and half a dozen other stunts were performed. Dorothy Hester completed her famous outside loop flawlessly. Frank Brooks made a triple parachute drop. Brooks stepped out of a big monoplane at about 3,500 feet and a red parachute opened. He cut away this parachute and floated down below a white parachute, and finally let loose a blue one, which he maneuvered to land at the eastern end of the airstrip. A field broadcasting set, mounted on a truck, made announcements throughout the program to call attention to particular stunts as they were being performed.

The number in attendance at the air show was never officially announced. The *Moscow Star-Mirror* reported "numbers parked their cars on adjacent hillsides and thus escaped paying the admittance fee." Estimates were that the crowd numbered about 3,000. The Moscow Chamber of Commerce reported receipts of approximately \$700.00. It was speculated that a larger crowd would have attended if the Tour had not taken place during harvest.

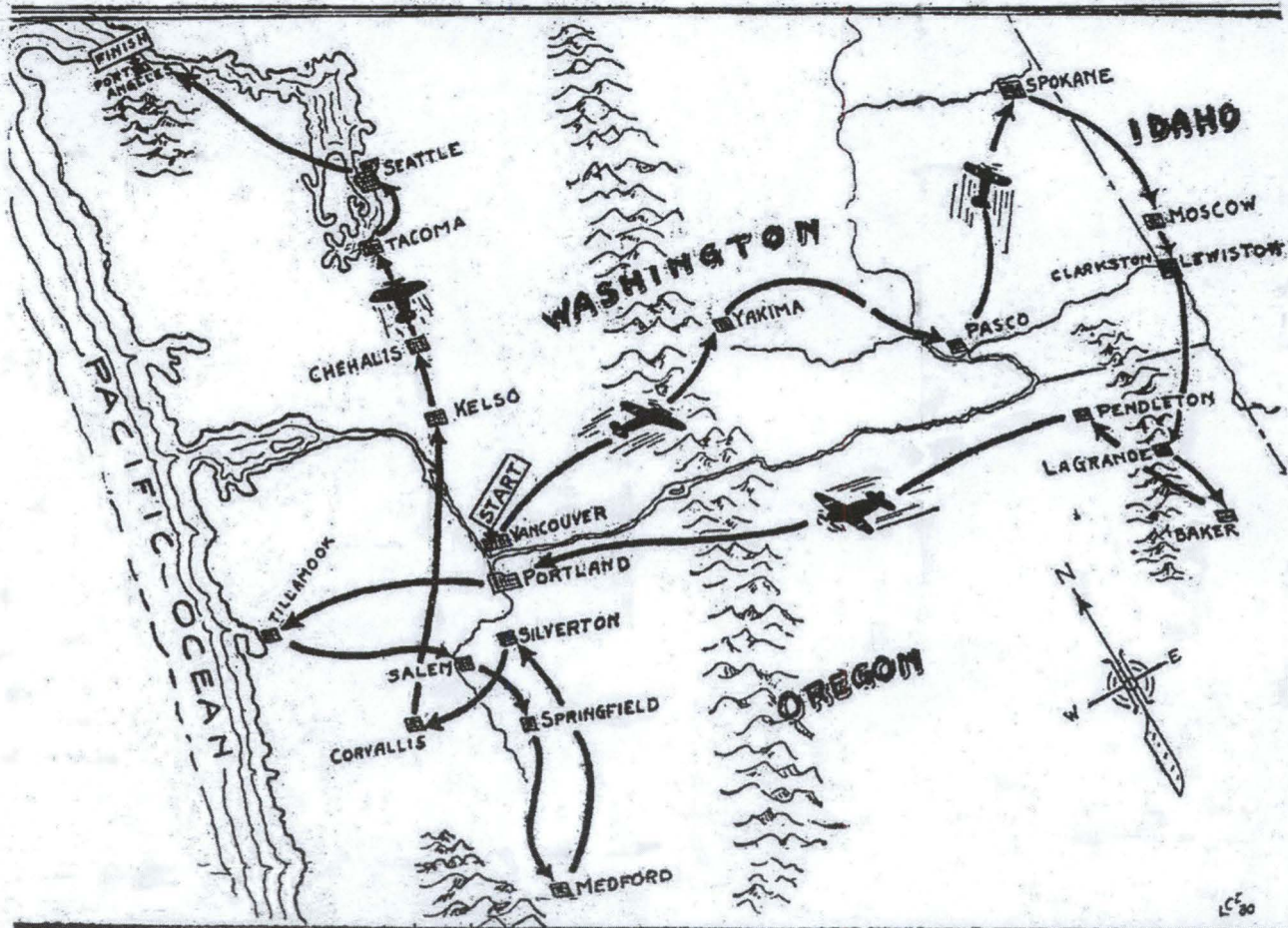


Courtesy of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society

Only three Moscow girls and boys won free rides for selling advance tickets. They were John Neely, Pauline Frei and Kenneth Halverson. Keith Adams also won a trip by catching a doll attached to a small parachute that was tossed out of a plane piloted by Edith Foltz.

Few artifacts remain from the NW Air Tour and Moscow Air Circus of 1930. The Moscow Chamber of Commerce has no records of the event. Nothing is in the archives of the Latah County Historical Society. No pictures exist in our extensive photo collection. The one artifact that was found, an event cover, came from eBay and provided the impetus for this author to research this event. Event covers are envelopes that commemorate a particular event, in this case the NW Air Tour and Moscow Air Circus. It is postmarked in Moscow on July 31, 1930, the day of the event. I have found no indication of who produced this event cover or how it was sold. There appears to have been a series of the covers produced, since my research yielded event covers for the Air Tour from Yakima on July 29, 1930, Pasco on July 30,

ROUTE OF AIR TOUR COMING HERE



—Courtesy of The Oregon Journal

ITINERARY OF THE NORTHWEST AIR TOUR, for which arrangements were completed Wednesday to bring to Moscow, is shown by the above map. It shows that Moscow is the only town in Idaho which will be visited by the 50 airplanes, stunt pilots, parachute jumps and their ground crews during their ten-day tour of 22 northwestern cities. The tour will spend the day of July 31 in Moscow, arriving at 10 a. m. and departing for Clarkston airport at 3 p. m.

Itinerary & Advertisement courtesy of the Daily Idahonian, 1930

Portland on August 2, Tillamook on August 3, Silverton on August 5, and Corvallis on August 5, 1930. The visit of the Tour to Medford coincided with the dedication of the Medford airport. As such, the event cover for that day is for the airport dedication and not the Tour.

Although there was another NW Air Tour in 1931, it went to Nampa, Idaho, instead of Moscow. To my knowledge, no other Air Tours visited Moscow. John Neely was a nine-year-old boy when he won the free airplane ride for selling tickets to the NW Air Tour and Moscow Air Circus. John had a life-long love of flying. I can't say that it was due to his participation in the Tour. However, I can imagine a nine-year-old boy standing in the warm July sun, watching "Princess Kick-a-Hole-in-the-Sky" perform, and wishing he had wings of his own.

FREE AIRPLANE RIDES for 50 YOUNG PEOPLE

THE MOSCOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SPONSORING
THE

PACIFIC NORTHWEST AIR TOUR

offers a free 25-mile trip in a cabin plane to each boy or girl who sells \$15 or more worth of tickets to the Air Tour Coming here next Thursday. *Everyone will attend. Start Selling Tickets Early and Earn a Dandy Air Trip.*

Apply to Frank Bumgarner at the Moscow State Bank.

Moscow Women's Social Clubs

1892—2010

Joann Crecelius Jones BS, MS

**The more we get together, together, together,
the more we get together, the happier are we.**

For your friends are my friends,

And my friends are your friends,

The more we get together the happier are we!

—LCHS LC Worthwhile Women's Social Club Song

I dedicate this research and writing to late Worthwhile Club member, Kathleen Warnick, who shared her vast knowledge of lace, historic textiles and clothing, and the tools used to make them with numerous visitors to the McConnell Mansion, students in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences and with me as she volunteered many, many, many hours identifying, classifying and describing textile items donated to LCHS during the fifteen years I was Curator of the Society's Collections.

The familiar tune this verse brings to mind will have you humming or singing or maybe even whistling soon. I did when I opened a notebook I found in one of the collections in the Latah County Historical Society's (LCHS) Archives. The lyrics of The More We Get Together jumped out of the April 1999 Clearwater Power Ruralite article glued on the notebook cover. The reporter's human interest story was about a women's club celebrating its 60th anniversary in the Tomer Butte School District, a small community four miles southeast of Moscow, Idaho. Humming the tune, I read about reporter Bill London's visit with the nine remaining Worthwhile Club members. These women were meeting monthly and just socializing at the end of the 20th century. Club officers were no longer needed since they no longer collected dues, made quilts, or had donation projects.

Throughout most of the club's existence, however, dues were collected. Members also donated their extra fabrics, sewing materials, and tools, canned food, canning equipment and produce from their gardens to make many years of annual donations to the Opportunity School, the school for disabled children in Moscow, and the North Idaho Children's Home in nearby Lewiston, Idaho. This small group of northern Idaho women was not unique. Similar groups of friends and neighbors influenced by New

York Tribune column writer, Jane Cunningham Croly, were meeting throughout the country.

Croly, also known as Jennie June, the first female journalist to write a regular syndicated column in the United States, was never an advocate for women's rights. She gave her female middle-class readers practical advice that made sense. She wanted them to improve themselves by seeking education and opportunities for self-improvement to make a difference in their daily lives. Newspapers with Croly's column followed the settlement of the West.

The Women's Social Club Movement began in New York in 1868 and spread rapidly throughout the United States reaching Idaho in 1888. The Idaho clubs, like those in other states, provided a means for education and self-improvement through discussion and sharing new ideas, concepts, and methods with other women. The General Federation of Women's Clubs was formed during a nation-wide assembly held in 1894. Column writer Croly joined with the federation's commitment to the betterment of middle-class women in American society.

Robert G. Waite, Idaho State University, along with other Idaho scholars studied the variety of women's social clubs



Pleiades members: right—Mrs. Charles Shields, second from right—Lillie Lieuallen Woodworth, second from left—Mrs. C. L. Gritman
 LCHS 30-04-070

in the state during the twentieth century. They identified women's clubs as a prominent feature of many American cities in the late nineteenth century. Clubs provided a means of gaining knowledge and training and power through solidarity. Waite's team found the kinds of groups and the communities where they organized in Idaho varied a good deal. The earliest, those organized close to 1900, were much more homogeneous in their objectives of gaining more education and self-improvement. Two such clubs were organized in Moscow, Pleiades and the Ladies Historical Club.

PLEIADES, organized in 1892

Pleiades, created in 1892 by seven University of Idaho (UI) faculty wives, met weekly to discuss books they read. Within three years these women learned of and joined the General Federation of Women's Clubs. In her 1898 book on the history of the women's movement, Mrs. Jennie June Croly included information provided by individual clubs throughout the United States. The book included photos of three Pleiades members in front of the home of UI President and Mrs. Gault. Mrs. Gault and the other six members met in the home to participate in the Federation's



1897 Mrs. Gault, Chrisman, Fox, Henderson, McCurdy, Ostrander, Aldrich, Bonebright. All except Mrs. Chrisman were charter members of Pleiades. LCHS 01-11-355

Jane Cunningham Croly

Jane Cunningham was born in 1829 in Leicestershire, England, and came with her family to the United States in 1841 after her father's unpopular Unitarian beliefs and preaching ostensibly resulted in the stoning of their home in England. She grew up in New York, her education consisting mainly of reading the books in her father's library. After her father's death, she went to New York City in 1854 in search of a means of supporting herself. She worked as a journalist for several New York City papers and married David Goodman Croly, a fellow journalist, in 1856.

She began writing a women's column, "Parlor and Side-Walk Gossip," under the pen name Jennie June. The column became quite popular in New York City and went to syndication in 1857, appearing in papers in New Orleans, Richmond, Baltimore, and Louisville. After the failure of the newspaper Jane and her husband had founded in Rockford, Illinois, around 1860, the Crolys returned to New York where they continued careers in journalism. Jane was an early working mother having given birth to five children, one of whom died in infancy. Over the years she became the sole financial supporter for her family as her husband's interests left journalism and his health declined. He died an invalid in 1889.

The dedication in her book *The History of the Woman's Club Movement*, first published in 1898, reads: "This book has been a labor of love; and it is lovingly dedicated to the Twentieth Century Woman by one who has seen, and shared in the struggles, hopes, and aspirations of the women of the Nineteenth Century."

Jane Cunningham Croly died in New York City in 1901. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1994.

correlated study of Shakespeare's plays, supplemented by book reviews and papers on a wide variety of subjects. Club members divided into discussion groups addressing four categories: literature, home, education, and philanthropy. This club is the longest continuously meeting women's social club in Moscow. New members are invited to join but membership is kept around fifteen.

An early club project suggested by member Mrs. F.B. Gault in the fall of 1901 was the "gold and silver" book designed by UI art teacher Annette Bowman which attracted favorable attention as part of Idaho's exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair. The book, fashioned from Idaho gold, silver, and precious gem stones, continues to be a treasured possession of the University.

Member Mrs. C.W. McCurdy introduced another early project: to organize a second club with a larger membership including townswomen as well as those connected to the

Moscow Historical Club.

Object

The object of this club shall be to create an organized center of thought and action among women, for the promotion of social, educational, literary and technical growth and ^{whatsoever} related to the best interests of our city and state.

Pledge

Holding my membership in the Historical Club as worthy of esteem and loyalty, I promise to sustain the club in its good work, to guard its reputation, and to perform promptly, cheerfully, and to the best of my ability, my duty as a club member.

Historical Club mission statement, LCHS Historical Club Archive

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I would like to become a member of The Historical Club of Moscow, Idaho. The required \$2.00 fee accompanies this application.

Signed Lillian Brown

Date 7-21-94

Recommended by the following club member:

1. Majorie Day Peterson
2. Mildred Burlingame

Historical Club membership form, LCHS Historical Club Archive

University. The purpose was to do thorough historical research and literature reviews.

LADIES HISTORICAL CLUB, organized in 1895

Mrs. McCurdy's idea for a second club, the Ladies Historical Club, became a reality in 1895 when twenty-five other women also saw a need for the area's children to have the benefits of reading books. With the cooperation

of Pleiades, a project to start a “free library” was launched in the fall of 1901. Money was needed, so they went where the money was; the ladies of the Historical Club visited the store owners on the east side of Main Street asking for pledges while the Pleiades women went to the west-side owners. They collected \$340. A joint committee rented a downtown room in the Brown Building for \$3.00 monthly to serve as the initial free library. Lumber for tables and chairs, a stove and a half-ton of coal were purchased; a man was hired for cleaning. The women worked jointly to serve as librarians until Miss Etta Maguire was hired for \$20 monthly.

“The best of a book is the thought it suggests.”

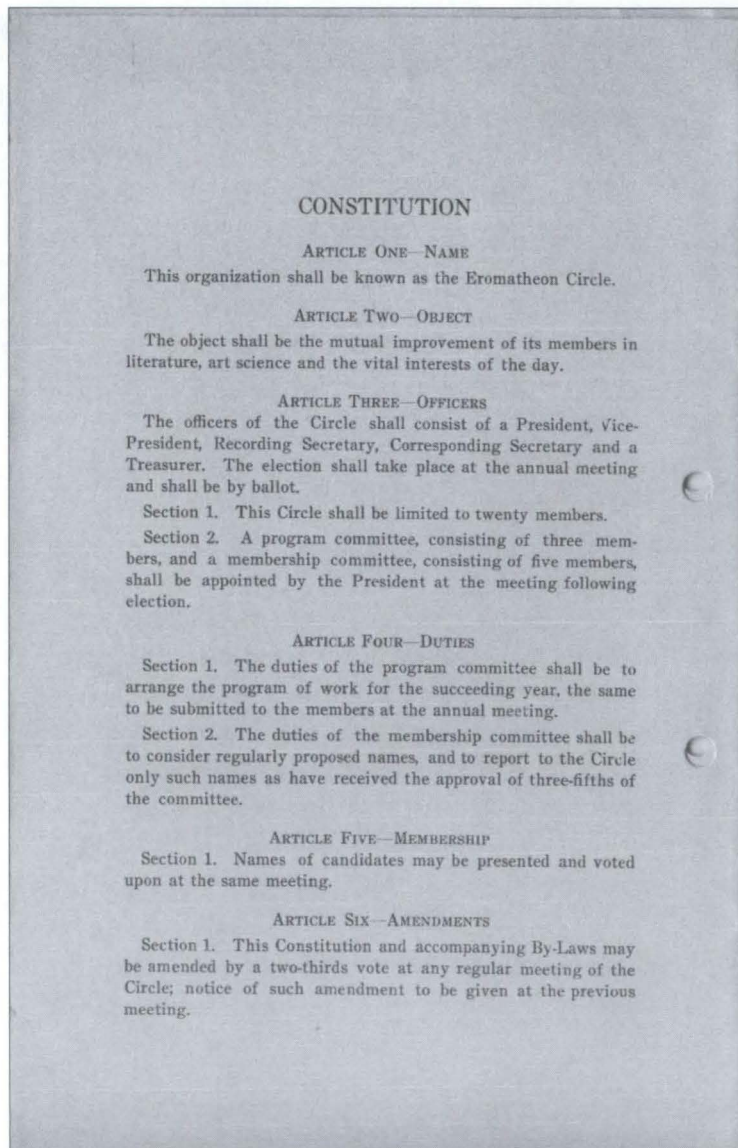
—from a club yearbook.

Correspondence with Andrew Carnegie, begun in 1903, secured a promise of \$10,000 for Moscow’s library. The current site was purchased for \$1,150, the city voted for a millage tax guaranteeing \$1,000 a year, and construction began. Pleiades and Ladies Historical Club members watched as the building they started went up. It was completed in 1906 just four years after the small free library room opened. The Moscow Ladies Historical Club celebrated its 100th anniversary of meeting and recording the community’s history in 1995.

EROMATHEON CIRCLE, organized 1907

Late in my research LCHS Director Daniel Crandall came across a collection of yearly programs, 1908 through 1938, with club bylaws, constitution and membership lists for the Eromatheon Circle, another early women’s club in Moscow. The club, founded in 1907 for “the mutual improvement of its members, arts, science and the vital interests of the day,” joined the District Federation in 1910. This documentation of a Moscow club of town women seeking self-improvement through community involvement in social clubs, a pursuit Croly wrote about in her syndicated column, is proof Moscow women were aware of and participating in the national movement. The similarity in format and content of the Eromatheon Circle’s constitution and bylaws to those of the District and National Federation also ties Moscow’s clubs to a larger movement.

Twentieth century Latah County women quickly changed from pioneers moving into new, unsettled country to lonely settlers who were now members of new communities. Social clubs provided an organized, reliable way to meet neighbors with common interests, satisfying their need to talk with peers and nurture each other. Nine social clubs that were organized in the Moscow vicinity early in the twentieth century have donated collections of their records to the county historical society’s research library. As I investigated these records, I was intrigued with the advances the women



Eromatheon Circle constitution, LCHS Whitmore Archive

made for themselves and the donations they made to their local communities. I am impressed with this quiet women’s movement. Using primary sources to investigate the topic was exciting and gave me some insight to their personalities. For example, one secretary wrote this advice at the end of her minutes:

“To Keep Young—KEEP LIMBER, LOVING (?) and a LITTLE LOONY”

Personal memories recorded in diaries and photographs make up a large portion of the LCHS collection. I found this to be true of the women’s social club archives also. The secretaries’ handwritten minutes are the diaries of each club. These minute books spanning over one hundred and twenty years hold the many thoughts, ideas, explanations, actions, results of their projects, and activities. The minutes, like diaries, relate how women with these demographics reacted to the contemporary events and their responses to benefit their communities.



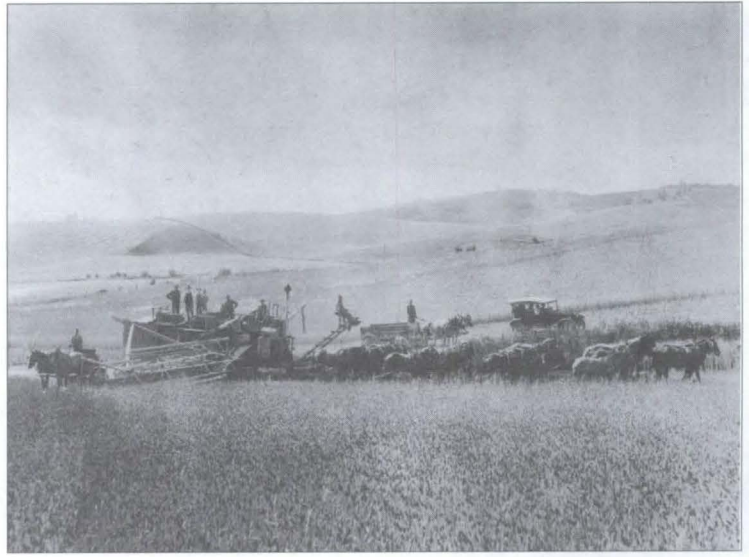
Like the Home Ec class shown here, women in social clubs across the country did their part in the home-front effort by learning how to make and roll bandages for wounded troops.

LCHS 30-17-033

The twentieth century was the era of photographs, primarily snapshots. Looking through group photos of club members in the black-and-white records of their activities and projects in the first half of the century, followed later by color pictures that members took and then selected to add to scrapbooks, was a welcome change from reading minutes. Newspaper human interest stories and articles telling the rest of Moscow about an anniversary or special contribution to the town, like the beginning of the library and donations to local children's homes, were inspirational. Photographs always accompanied these articles.

Photo collections in farm family scrapbooks and century farm reports collected during the county centennial illustrate the changes the settlers made. The contemporary authors of *An Illustrated History of North Idaho* (1903) related accounts of transplants like Archie and Sarah Estes who migrated to Latah County from Arkansas after their marriage in 1874. Archie, armed with a good education and knowledge of farming, came to Idaho with ox and mule teams. The trip took six months. The couple settled four miles north of Moscow where "he devoted his energies and time to the development of his estate." Estes and his fellow farmers built up the county as a paradise for growing wheat.

Professional photographers loaded their cameras, glass negative plates, and black shading cloths in their wagons, headed to the farmers' fields and recorded all the activity along farm roads like Estes Road. Farmers, along with their neighbors and all their sons, multiple teams of horses, large pieces of harvesting equipment, piles of sewn-shut bags of grain, and golden field backgrounds, fill these descriptive photographs and later snapshot records of life in the fields. It was definitely hard work and it took more



Professional photographer's photo, Harvest, Naylor Farm on Estes Road. *LCHS 25-02-238*

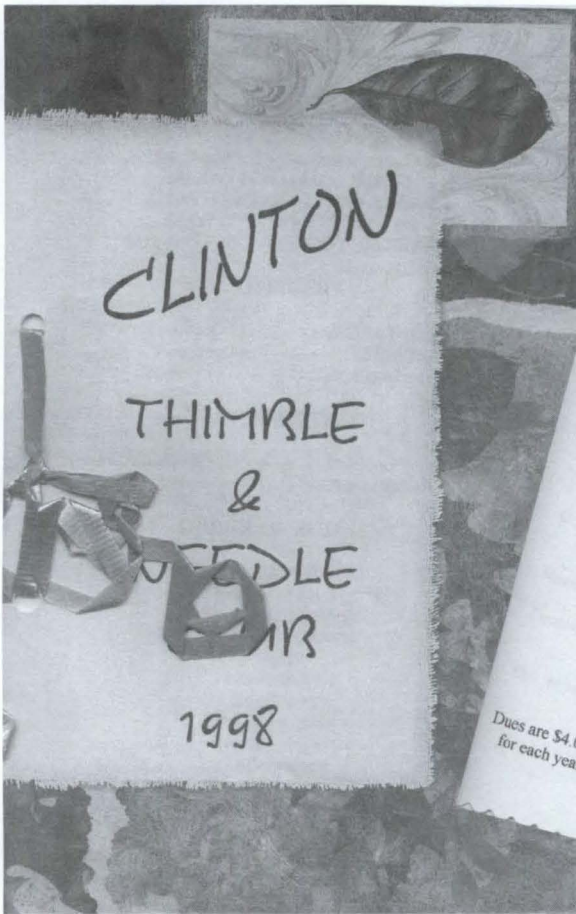
than one man and his few sons to do it successfully. These men accomplished much more when they got to know their neighbors by forming social relationships while working side by side in the fields and on other projects.

Meanwhile, what were Sarah Estes and the other women living in the Estes Road neighborhood doing? The author's description of Archie Estes' life told me he married before moving west but said nothing more about his wife's role during their long trip and the development of their homestead. Was she active in the neighborhood, the community?

The day's many activities of farm wives inside their houses, by themselves or with the couple's young children while the older kids were outside playing, could be lonely. Completing the same household chores alone while older children were at school could be boring day after day. Club days offered a break from this routine. Even though they may have taken the same basket of mending to meetings, the work went faster while talking with other women. Expressing individual ideas and discussing issues important to them, independent of their husbands, gave them the freedom and the self awareness Croly wrote about.

ESTES CLUB, organized in 1909

The Estes Club, organized in rural Latah County, Idaho, is an excellent example of a western women's social club. It is a neighborhood club organized in 1909 by a group of farm wives living on or near Estes Road. Some of these women decided having a birthday party was a good way to bring more women in the neighborhood together. One such party was the first meeting of the Estes women's social club. An account I found in one of their scrapbooks called the meetings "Socials." One member, the daughter of a founder, recounted in a newspaper



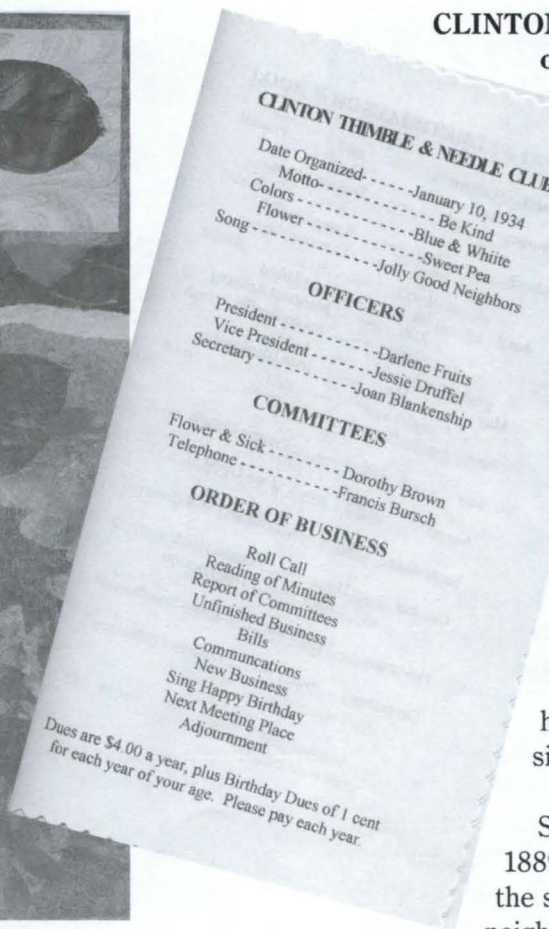
LCHS Clinton Thimble & Needle Club Archive

CLINTON THIMBLE & NEEDLE CLUB, organized in 1934

The oral history of the Clinton Thimble & Needle Club provides valuable information about the women of Clinton. Neighbor women living in the Thorncreek area of Latah County, Idaho, and Whitman County, Washington, “hemmed towels for the hostess when they all got together for visits,” I heard one club member say. Another, quieter voice added, “Yes, they hemmed a lot of towels in this small community and made a lot of dear friends.” The words in the recording reveal much about the close ties that developed when these women hemmed and exchanged something as simple as tea towels together.

Statehood for Washington and Idaho in 1889 and 1890 legally divided Clinton at the state line, but it didn’t divide the Clinton neighborhood. Forty-four years after the division, friends from the two states organized the Clinton Thimble and Needle Club on January 10, 1934, adopting their neighborhood’s name for the club. The Clinton, Washington, community consisted of the Clinton School, the typical store/post office and postmaster’s family home, a blacksmith’s shop, and a few houses. One of the few remaining 19th century houses, the early stagecoach stop, was also used as a hotel for people travelling between Spokane, Washington, and Lewiston, Idaho.

The first meeting of the Clinton Thimble & Needle Club was attended by Mabel Johnson, Francis Bursch, Edna Matheson, Eveline (Evelyn) Brown, Lena Haynes, Jennie Haynes, and hostess Mary Haynes. During the group’s April 11, 1984, 50th anniversary party Jennie presented a recap of the club’s first fifty years. Her granddaughter shared the recap with the club’s members during a meeting in 1998. LCHS volunteer Marian Manis was invited to attend this meeting and record their memories to add to the Society’s extensive oral history collection. On the tape these women share memories of recent club members, as well as pieces of local history of the Thorncreek area and some of its people, talking about the layout of their town, who was related to whom, activities, and events they remembered, including sewing and money-making projects. Many neighborhood young men served in the armed forces during WWII and the club made pajamas, bed-slippers, and covers for bedpans and hot water bottles for hospitals caring



interview, “they never socialized, and Club was their activity.” Over the years their activities included many different things from working together to help a member shell a large crop of peas to rolling bandages for World War I and II soldiers. I’ve never been with a group of women who didn’t socialize with friends while they worked on activities.

Like other rural clubs these women responded with prepared foods, warm quilts and, of course, stuffed toys for each child when tragedy struck any family.

When I asked Glenda Hawley if she ever was a member of the Estes Club when she lived near Viola, she proudly said she was and is the current president. The club members continue to meet to share memories.

Many young women formed social support groups to achieve the right to vote in the early 1900’s. This was never part of the women’s social club movement. These social groups were patriotic, however. When US soldiers went to war, the Federation of Women’s Social Clubs organized the distribution of large shipments of bandages and warm clothing that they had quickly volunteered to make in support of the nation’s World War I troops. Their daughters followed their mothers’ lead decades later during World War II. These groups of women were proud to record their achievements in their club scrapbooks.



Worthwhile Club with their historic trail marker at Tomer Butte. LCHS 25-08-021

for wartime servicemen. Listening to the tape, I could hear their pride still in having received commendations for a job well done from both the Moscow and Pullman chapters of the Red Cross.

The Clinton Thimble & Needle Club membership list of fourteen active members identified in "Look Who's Having Club" in 1998 includes two names, Francis Bursch and Evelyn Brown, who have been on the membership list since that first 1934 meeting. A quote from the 1998 oral history describes the social clubs in the Moscow area and across the country at the millennium: "The times are a changin'. There are many widows among us nowadays. Most of us are grandmothers and many are great-grandmothers." I was surprised to hear, however, that "we also have several young mothers in our midst, who are getting another generation started, helping to keep our neighborhood young and active." Why is this group of women expanding? Like their predecessors they are forming a social network prepared to donate their time and energy for the good of their neighbors, welcoming newcomers, supporting their small community, and learning while helping each other.

Clubs organized by small groups of women in rural areas like the Palouse have been a part of the settling of America since the 1700s. These clubs formed out of the need to socialize and express their thoughts and ideas with equals. The hours they spent together knitting or embroidering provided times when members could observe, ask questions and learn from a variety of women in similar life situations.

Nineteenth and twentieth century clubs were different, however, due to two far reaching concepts: freedom and technology. Now in the twentieth century it was feasible for women in the Free World to learn from a variety of women in similar situations across the world. The introduction of new technologies expanded the possibilities of what was available to everyone, including women.

THE WORTHWHILE CLUB, organized in 1929

One November day in 1929 two long-time friends and neighbors, Mrs. Adolph Carlson and Mrs. Wesley Goddard, talked about starting a neighborhood club to include the half dozen women living in the Mt. Tomer school district southeast of Moscow. During a friendly meeting in Mrs. Goddard's home, the two friends explained their club idea to their neighbors and asked each to join them in writing their new organization's constitution. In the second article of their constitution the founders stated, "the object of this Club shall be to promote the friendship of women in our neighborhood and to help the worthy projects in the community." Like the Pleiades founders, the two women may have known about the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

The Worthwhile Club constitution set up actions and limits regarding membership, election and the duties of officers. The fifth article in the women's document set up the calendar of when they would meet and how the meetings would be structured. The club met twice monthly,



LEFT: Five fun-loving members of the club wore their clean, pressed kitchen aprons and common kitchen tools when they formed the Estes Kitchen Band for their mid-twentieth Century audience.

BELOW: Over the years their activities included many different things from working together to help a member shell a large crop of peas to rolling bandages for WWI & II soldiers.

Photos courtesy of Estes Club, circa 1910

charged a 50-cent entry fee and \$1 annual dues. They developed friendships, many that continued throughout their lives. The women gathered in members' homes to talk while they created beautiful, warm quilts. They worked side by side while they canned the fruits and vegetables grown in their farm gardens. These women prepared gifts for neighbors when disaster struck, even neighbors as far away as the north Latah County towns of Potlatch and Deary.



With the club's bankroll from dues and members' contributions of money and sewing materials, the Worthwhile Club proved that it was worthy of its name by donating quilts and preserved food annually to Moscow's Opportunity School for disabled children and the Children's Home in Lewiston. They also sponsored a girl and a boy who lived in the home, sending them gifts until they turned eighteen or left the home. Preserved foods and jellies made by the women arrived at the Children's Home every winter.

The club's membership grew during the 1940s, reaching approximately thirty-five women. Additional women's clubs were formed in the rural areas of Latah County during this time, but these clubs, usually sponsored by the agricultural extension office, were different in their purpose and methods of educating members. The US Department

of Agriculture offered prepared programs on subjects including nutrition, food preservation, and other family and home topics to be presented to the public through county extension offices. Club members were homemakers seeking education and opportunities for self-improvement who used the information from the extension programs, sharing and discussing it during club meetings, thereby improving themselves to make a difference in their daily lives. Reporter Bill London quoted charter member Stella Oleson when she stressed "The Worthwhile Club was not one of those 'Home Ec.' Clubs...we were not in the extension agency program, we were our own club."

Kathleen Warnick, a friend of mine and one of the remaining members of the club, proudly told me the background of one of their projects, a historic trail marker near the Tomer School site. Four of the members' husbands removed a large stone from the heights of Tomer Butte and moved it to mark the place where the 1840s Fremont

Club scrapbooks contain the many newspaper clippings that kept the community informed of the women's activities LCHS LC Mokepahreca Club



LADIES OF THE CLUB: The Mokepahreca Club celebrated its 75th birthday Thursday. Club members — “a very good mixture of townspeople and university people” — had cake at the McConnell Mansion. “Back in 1910, they met the second and fourth Thursday for sewing and to visit,” said club member Norma Lewis. Things haven’t changed much. Club members are still sewing and still sponsoring philanthropic causes. *Velma Dunn - gone*

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How the MOKEPAHRECA Women’s Social Club Got its Name

Probably no other club in the world shares the name of the MOKEPAHRECA women’s social club in Moscow, Idaho. The fifteen original members of the group used their ingenuity. Eleven letters representing the initials of the given names of the original members were carefully arranged by the founders of this social club to create its name in 1910. The pleasant sound of the arrangement they selected, MOKEPAHRECA, equaled the beauty of their handwork. The following information about each of the founders was compiled by long-time member Marian Wise a few years ago and reported to the current members at a meeting held at Good Samaritan Retirement Village, where several of the members now live.

M/ Maebelle Sherfey was owner, with her husband Ross, of Sherfey’s Bookstore from 1903–39. He was the mayor of Moscow when she belonged to the club.

M/ Mae Witcher was a widow living on the west side of Moscow in 1910 when the club began.

O/ Ora Carter and her husband Ray owned Carter’s Drug in 1910.

K/ Kitty Washburn and her husband Melvin were listed as part owners of Washburn and Wilson Seed Company in the 1910 survey.

E/ Emma Atwood and her husband H. P. bought real estate in Latah County from 1902 to 1920 and were living in Moscow until 1920.

E/ Eleanor Suppiger was married to George Suppiger, a Moscow lawyer. They made their home in west Moscow in 1910.

P/ Pearl Gray was born in Idaho and married her husband Fred at a young age. Fred was listed as a laborer on the 1910 census.

A/ Avis Collins, wife of Moscow merchant Joseph Collins, lived in Moscow thirty-nine years, gave birth to four children and had four

grandchildren and one great-grandchild when she died at the age of eighty at Gritman Hospital.

H/ Helen Denning was married to Judge S. S. Denning. The couple lived in Moscow many years.

R/ Rachel Atwood was mentioned in early Mokepahreca minutes, but no other information about her was found.

E/ Emma Stewart moved west with her parents to Moscow where her father was the town’s first furniture dealer. In 1884, two years after she arrived, she married George Stewart, the owner of the first livery barn here. She was an active member of the Methodist Church for fifty years.

E/ Ella Stewart and her husband Peter were early Moscow settlers coming in 1886. Mr. Stewart was listed as a liveryman in the 1910 census.

E/ Emma Hoagland and her husband Theodore were early Moscow settlers when Minister Hoagland started the local Methodist Church in 1882.

C/ Cora Conner founded two sewing clubs, Merry-Go-Round and Mokepahreca, during the years she and her husband William lived in Moscow, 1903 to 1932. When her husband died, she moved to Pullman, Washington, where she founded yet another women’s social club, the Merry Workers. She maintained her Moscow social club memberships.

A/ Amelia Wright was born February 22, 1879, at Laramie, Wyoming. Her newspaper obituary contained additional information relating to her interests during her later 30-year life in Moscow. At 30 she was already a widow and lived with her father on Asbury Street in west Moscow in 1910. She died in 1938 at the age of 58.



Bluebell Holmberg, Esther Hughes, Marie Pavel, Stella Oleson, Alice Cain, Pearl Williams, Grace Lyon, Miriam Smith, and Kathleen Warnick at the trail junction memorial. *Ruralite* 17, no. 4 (April 1990) in *LCHS LC Worthwhile Club*

expedition to the Oregon Territory noted that they crossed deeply worn trails made by the native people. Nez Perce families climbed the rocky hills from the lower river country to the higher prairies carrying their belongings to summer camps. They picked and preserved berries, dug and roasted camas bulbs, and hunted elk, moose, and deer. When the tall larch pine needles turned a brilliant yellow they moved their belongings and harvest on travois and on their backs down to their winter camps along the rivers and their annual salmon harvests.

Worthwhile Club members sponsored a well-attended celebration following the dedication of the monument, complete with speeches, a meal and a sing-along. After reading about the event, I found myself again humming their song, "The More We Get Together".

Women's club meetings typically were held in members' homes. Alternating hostesses did their best to make their homes cozy and inviting. The carefully planned refreshments, noted in the secretaries' minutes and anniversary summaries, were always deliciously described. Some social clubs limited the number of members. The Worthwhile Club's original constitution stated "Candidates for membership shall be investigated by the Membership Committee, and upon approval shall become members of the Club by signing the Constitution and paying a \$.50 entrance fee and their \$1.00 dues." Clinton Thimble and Needle Club, the only club still collecting dues at this time, raised them to \$2.00 per year in the early 1990s and another \$2.00 a few years later to "keep up with this disease called inflation." Prior to the 1990s members paid 10 cents a month, \$1.20 per year.

THE MOKEPAHRECA CLUB, organized in 1910

A group of neighbor women living in the west side of Moscow met to spend afternoons together sewing. Some



Author Joann Jones (far right) at lunch with MOKEPAHRECA friends, 2012. L-R: Betty Conrad, Marian Wise, Jane Goetschel, Gloria Johnston, Jones

came with their weekly mending while other women embroidered, tatted, and worked on other handwork. Social clubs overwhelmingly identified themselves as sewing groups, but what brought them back meeting after meeting was the new freedom to discuss anything they wanted to without male input. The Mokepahreca (Mokies) Club was organized at a time, 1910, when women discussing politics and business were seen as unladylike. With newspaper columns by Jane Cunningham Croly and followers promoting women's self-education and awareness, this was changing. The demographics of the women and their husbands in this group indicate these women had second- if not first-hand knowledge of almost everything happening in Moscow. The biographies of the women invited to join the club during the 20th century offer a lot of inside information about Moscow history. The women were also benefactors helping many local needy people and contributing a portion of their treasury to the Moscow Food Bank before each Christmas season. They were proud of supporting a French child for a year during World War I.

In 2010 I had the privilege of sharing one of the many tables of fellow members of the Mokepahreca Club and their invited guests attending the club's centennial banquet held at the University Inn/Best Western. Seated beside me was Moscow Mayor Nancy Chaney. Seventy years earlier Mokey members had celebrated their thirtieth anniversary luncheon in a member's home just as they had held regular meetings in their homes. As members aged the meeting location moved to Good Samaritan Retirement Home or to restaurants. Regardless where they met, refreshments continued to be an important part of club meetings. By the twenty-first century club members in the Moscow vicinity were "just meeting to socialize."

Coffee and refreshments were served at an earlier Mokepahreca meeting I attended at Good Samaritan Retirement Village where many of the members lived. The women shared their collections of handwork, explaining

General Federation of Women's Clubs

"The General Federation of Women's Clubs is an international women's organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service."

The Federation traces its roots to 1868 when, based on the fact that she was female, Jane Cunningham Croly was refused admittance to an all-male press club dinner honoring Charles Dickens. The result -- she started a club, Sorosis, for women . . . and, as they say, the rest is history. Founded in 1890, GFWC was chartered in 1901 by the US Congress to be headquartered in Washington, DC.

Over the years the Federation has played an influential role in shaping modern life, passing a resolution against child labor, supporting causes like the juvenile court law, the eight-hour workday, and the Pure Food and Drug Act, among a host of other issues and activities. In 1930 the American Library Association credited women's clubs with establishing 75 percent of America's public libraries, the Moscow Public Library among them.

More information about the Federation and its history and accomplishments can be found at www.gfwc.org/gfwc/History_and_Mission.asp *Sidebar*

how the stitches and the finished items were made. The short meeting was followed by a program given by long-time member Marian Wise. She related her research of the founding members and the sources of her findings. Were these ladies aware that a women's club movement was spreading through Idaho and other states? Were they from one Moscow neighborhood or social group? Did they simply want to do their needlework in the company of other women? She shared the information about the original members of the club before adding it to the club scrapbook (*see sidebar*). Comparing this information with what I knew about the professions, recent lives and activities of the current members pointed out how Moscow has changed over the last century.

As I looked through the minutes of all of the Moscow neighborhood clubs I found that food, fellowship, and good works were all part of being a social club. Socializing with other clubs also happened. The whole town read about the April 1968 luncheon at the home of Mrs. J. Wade Justice, a Mokey member. The Daily News/Idahonian included photos of the women with their guests, the members of the Merry-Go-Round Club, all wearing clothing similar to the styles worn in the early 1900s when both clubs organized.

MERRY-GO-ROUND CLUB, organized in 1906

The original sixteen members of this local women's club, the earliest to be organized primarily for socializing, began meeting together in 1906. Mrs. Cora Conner organized



Final tableau for 10th anniversary of the Merry-Go-Round Club: Mrs. Moody surrounded by tating and club members. *LCHS LC Merry-Go-Round Club*

the neighborhood group to be a social get-together for the purpose of sewing or mending while visiting. The neighborhood involved the area around Lynn Avenue and Seventh Street in Moscow. A few years later when the Conner family moved across the state line to Pullman, Washington, Cora organized another neighborhood women's social club, but she maintained active membership in the Moscow Merry-Go-Round Club.

Minutes of club meetings from 1914 to 1983 have been donated to LCHS. For their 10th anniversary luncheon in 1916 members prepared pantomime tableaux, each one representing one year of club meetings. Together the tableaux illustrate an entertaining side of these women.

The first tableau had Mrs. Conner with a basket of socks inviting the members to come meet with her to form a darning club. Another pantomime was of Mrs. Preston seated at a table loaded with culinary delectables representing the simple refreshments that turned out to be more like banquets. Next was Mrs. M. L. Frazee with a huge water basin and a large towel representing Mrs. Wilson's finger bowls. Mrs. Schick had an agonized look of hunger on her face, representing the year the club abandoned refreshments altogether. Mrs. Towne illustrated brides dressed in white while Mrs. Schumacher, dressed in red and white, recalled the memory of a club joke. Large red strawberries scattered on Mrs. A. A. Frazee's white crepe dress brought the club's annual strawberry feasts to mind. The final tableau had yards and yards of tating surrounding Mrs. Moody dressed in her beautiful embroidered kimono, a gift. The minute book noted that Mrs. Scheyer and Mrs. Campbell were absent December 1914.

Throughout the era of women's social clubs, many northern Idaho children were kept well fed and warm. One club secretary ended her minutes with a summary of the club's 1965 accomplishments: "We contributed to the

The Author on Historical Society Archives

The Latah County Historical Society Archives hold record books of women's social clubs located in or near Moscow, Idaho. Each of these were organized social clubs with presidents' agendas, secretaries' minute books, treasurers' reports, and lists of members, indicating they were structured clubs that collected dues and recorded how they were used. My interest in learning about Moscow's women's social clubs grew out of an invitation to talk with members of one such club. Since I was the Curator of Collections at the Latah County Historical Society, the group of women asked me to advise them on preserving their records. After explaining accepted storage methods to the group, I recommended they donate their materials to the LCHS Archives. I was familiar with collections of similar clubs' archives previously donated to LCHS. Only later did I realize that while I was looking over their collection of record books and memorabilia they were looking me over as a prospective member. The more I learned about the club as I read, the more I understood the value of women's clubs. When I was invited to join the group with its membership list of familiar names from Moscow's history, I gladly accepted. I catalogued their donation of records with call number LC: MOKEPAHRECA for archival storage and further research. It is one of the nine social club archives in the LCHS Library; all nine are primary sources for this article.

When a collection is offered to LCHS, a description of donated materials and the date and donor's name are recorded on a white sheet of acid-free paper with the heading, ARCHIVE RECORD. The LCHS curator determines whether the donation constitutes a large (LC) or small (SC) collection. After talking with the donor and reviewing the papers and bound record books, the contents are listed on the record, the computer database, and typed catalogue cards. Archive records present an inventory with brief descriptions of the organized records and their locations in acid-free storage containers in the LCHS Centennial Annex. For example, the Ivyhurst Club archive collection is stored in two acid-free cardboard boxes. Box 1 holds labeled legal size acid-free folders containing appropriate items and Box 2 holds hard-bound record books.

The Worthwhile Club members donated two copies of their club song along with meeting minutes, financial records, and scrapbooks of photos and news clippings to LCHS in 2006 when they discontinued organized meetings. LCHS staff organized the donated materials, creating a definitive record of the items as they prepared them for storage using standard conservation techniques. The collection is identified as L(arge) C(ollection): WORTHWHILE CLUB.

LCHS maintains a wooden card catalog file cabinet (circa 1900) where researchers will find the collection ID on cards filed under pertinent subjects. A number of LCHS volunteers are currently involved in the long process of digitizing collection records so that researchers in the future will be able to more easily search for information electronically using computers in the Annex Library.

Joann Jones, MS Home Economics, taught at the University of Idaho from 1976-86 and is LCHS Curator Emeritus.

Cancer Fund, Children's Home in Lewiston, and the Idaho Youth Ranch. Lastly we have consumed more angel food cakes with various toppings than any other desserts, in fact fourteen times, rhubarb pie or cake fourteen times, apple pie and cobblers and fruit salads thirteen times, to say nothing of thirty-eight other desserts."

IVYHURST CLUB, organized in 1914

The donation of records of the Ivyhurst Club is dated 11-18-04 after the donor's name on a white sheet of acid free paper with the heading, ARCHIVE RECORD. The Ivyhurst Club donation background paragraph tells the researcher:

"The Donor's wife, mother, and grandmother were all members of the Ivyhurst Club, a woman's handwork and sewing club in Moscow, Idaho, founded in 1914. Membership was extended by invitation. Materials date from 1927 forward into the 1970s. Included in the collection are record books, photographs, financial documents, correspondence, a history, membership lists, pamphlets, and ephemera such as a corn cob pipe gavel."

The Inventory includes the following record:

The History of the Ivyhurst Club

In the Spring of 1914, when people in some parts of the world were preparing for war, a small group of Moscow women were organizing the Ivyhurst Club, which has lasted all these years. Ivyhurst is a name taken from a book by an English author which was read at that time by Mrs. C.W. Brown, the first president of the club.

Organized as a sewing club, the activities of the members also include the exchange of ideas on cooking and household helps as well as many social functions such as silver teas, card parties and "Around the World Dinners." Through the years the club has spent many hours doing Red Cross work, and during the 1940s robes were made for the convalescent soldiers in Boise. In peace time, the club projects have centered on local needs such as making articles for the convalescent homes, the Lewiston Children's Home, and quilts for needy families.

Keeping club membership to living room-size was key to the success of the social clubs Jane Croly envisioned in the late 19th century. She was remembered in her obituary for "spending much of her life organizing venues for women to meet, learn, and discuss issues surrounding their roles in society. She started her first organization, the Women's Parliament, in 1856" seeking education and opportunities for self-improvement to make a difference in middle-class women's daily lives.

The records of the Moscow and nearby vicinity women's social clubs hold a wealth of women's history, first person accounts of meaningful friendships, and how the proceedings of the social clubs relate to this city's history. Because these archived records are preserved for researchers and museum professionals to use and study, this Moscow experience will add much to our understanding of American 20th century local history.

Merry-Go-Round secretary Anna G. Schick wrote in 1916, "The Merry-Go-Round is an infant no longer, can even be said to have past(sic) men's clubs, the Clinton, Estes, Ivyhurst and Mokepahreca Clubs, Pleiades, as well as the Moscow Ladies Historical Club, the Worthwhile and Eromatheon Women. "

You can find the records of all nine social clubs in the Latah County Historical Society Archives.

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LC: Moscow Historical Club. Latah County Historical Society Archives.

SC ERO-1: Eromatheon Circle. Latah County Historical Society Archives.

SC 98-19: Clinton Thimble & Needle Club. Latah County Historical Society.

LC: Worthwhile Club. Latah County Historical Society Archives.

LC: Ivyhurst Club. Latah County Historical Society Archives.

LC: Mokepahreca Club. Latah County Historical Society Archives.

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Waite, Robert G. "The Women's Club Movement in Idaho A Document on the Early Days". *Idaho Yesterdays*. Summer, 17, no. 1. 1992.

Suggested Reading by Jane Croly

For Better or Worse (1875)

Jennie Juneiana: Tales on Women's Topics (1864)

Cookery-Book for Young Housekeepers (1866)

Knitting and Crochet (1885)

Thrown on Her Own Resources (1891)

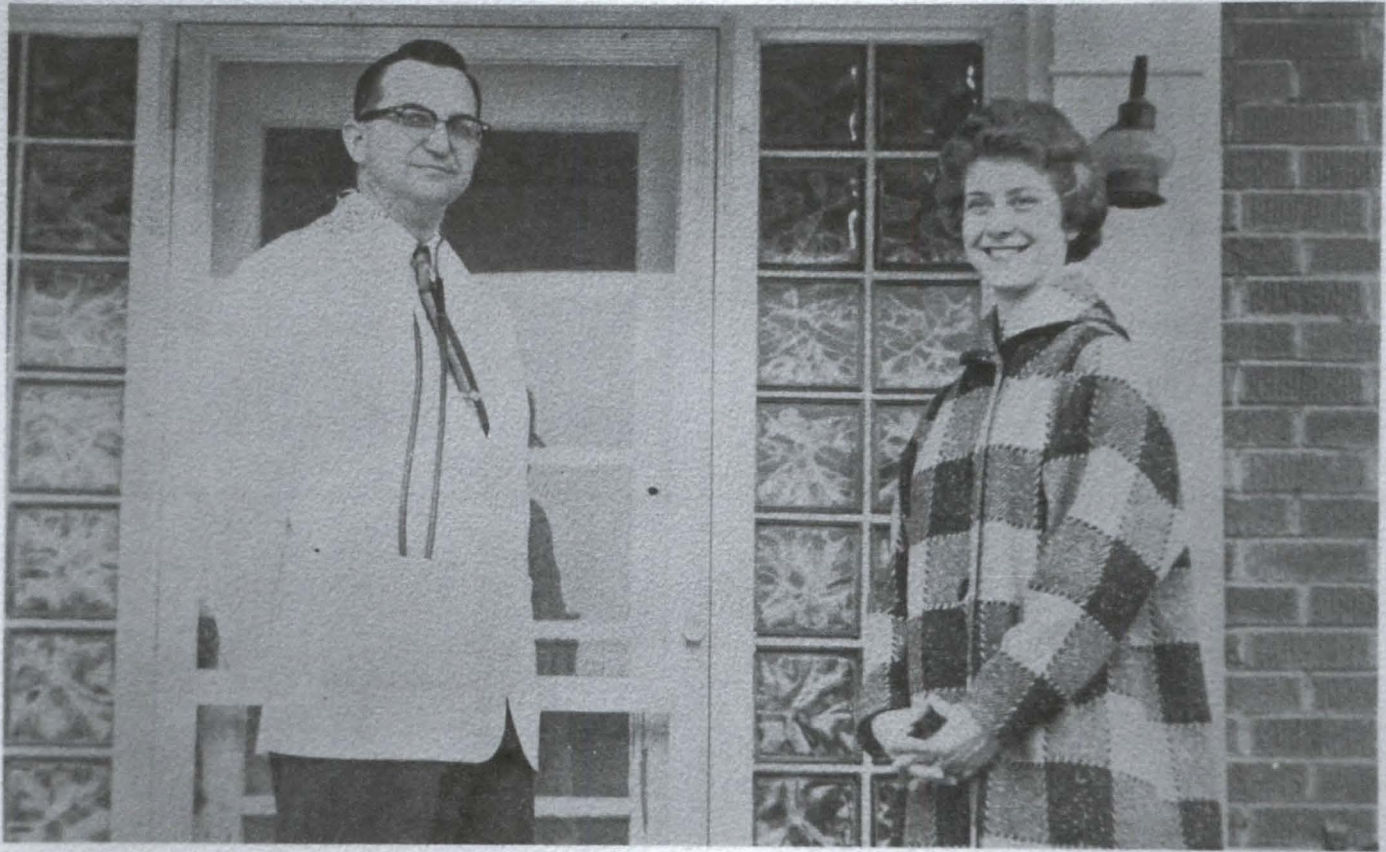
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DR. P. D. SPECHKO

DR. SPECHKO, M.D.

SHARON AHERIN

Dr. Philip Sprechko, Genesee's "Doc" from 1955 to 1967. GHS Yearbook, 1960, courtesy of Earl Bennett

To Get a
Doctor
to Practice in a Small Town:
A Cooperative Approach

by LeNelle McInturff



WWI troops in Genesee in 1918. Rosenstein's old store is to the right. Grant Clark's house is under construction in upper left.
John Lorang Collection, courtesy of Earl Bennett

An ongoing theme in medical care today is the problem of providing medical services in less populated, more rural areas of the country. Varying strategies have been proposed, including awarding additional scholarships to medical students who plan to practice rural medicine and forgiving some student loans for new doctors who agree to serve smaller communities for a number of years following their graduation. The problem of rural medical service is not a new one. Nearly 70 years ago the residents of Genesee, Idaho, adopted a cooperative approach to address it.

According to census figures for 1940 Genesee had a population of 678. As men and women returned home after World War II, America began a long march toward new growth and prosperity. The people of Genesee wanted the same for their town, but by the end of 1946 they found themselves without a doctor in the community. Since they felt local medical services were important for their future viability, a preliminary committee was formed, with Ed Morken as chairman, to study the problem and come up with a plan.

Dr. Almon J. White had come from Portland, Oregon, to Genesee to practice medicine sometime between 1935 and

1940. His office had been a tiny arrangement at the back of a larger building at the northwest corner of Walnut and Fir streets. By the end of 1946 he may have outgrown the existing facilities. At any rate he had moved his practice to Lewiston, Idaho, which no doubt promised greater opportunity, and at least some of his patients continued to seek his services there. The loss of the local doctor was probably a significant blow to Grant Clark, the druggist who owned and operated the drug store in Genesee. Apparently a new physician, Dr. J. W. (Jack) Clarke, was considering opening a practice in town, but perhaps needed some encouragement to do so.

Meetings of the preliminary committee resulted in a decision to form a cooperative, the Genesee Medical and Dental Non-Profit Cooperative Association, with the goal of providing suitable new facilities to attract a doctor and a dentist to the town. The officers of the original Board of Directors for the association were Chairman Rudolph E. Nordby, Treasurer Carl Simons, and Secretary Florent Moser. Attorney Tom Felton was hired to draft the necessary paperwork to form the association, and a Certificate of Incorporation was dated March 5, 1947. Residents bought memberships in the Association for \$25 each. In addition,



After tearing down Rosenstein's old store, Esser Construction built the Genesee Medical Building in 1948. *Wendy Woods Collection, courtesy of Earl Bennett*

residents were asked to donate or loan money to the association to be used to build a facility, and certificates were issued for all transactions. The plan was to construct a suitable building which would be leased to a doctor and dentist. The Association would pay for needed maintenance and repairs.

The Rosenstein family donated lots at the northeast corner of Walnut and Pine, and the old existing Rosenstein store was torn down to make room for the new medical/dental building. Local architect Frances Mortensen drew two alternate plans for the structure. The Association Board, in consultation with Dr. Clarke, chose her blueprints for a 36' x 48' building that would allow for medical office spaces and a surgery room on the main floor and in the basement, with living quarters on an upstairs level. Local carpenters were gathered to work on the building; they elected Lloyd Esser as their foreman for the construction. A public notice in the local paper to announce the start of construction was scheduled for May 1947. Volunteer workers were used as much as possible in the building process, so there was some delay in progress during July and August due to harvest operations.

By October 1947 it was apparent that more money would be needed to properly finish the building. Teams were organized to contact residents for more donations or loans. Fundraising fell short, so the Association decided to postpone finishing the living quarters on the upper floor. An open house for the (nearly) completed Genesee Medical and Dental Building was held on February 28, 1948, and the lease agreement with Dr.

J. W. Clarke was made effective March 1, 1948. Dr. Clarke hoped to sublease office space to a dentist.

This initial success in using a dedicated medical building to attract a physician to Genesee was short-lived, however. Dr. Clarke requested that his lease of the building be cancelled effective August 1, 1949. No indication of the reasons for the request was found in the minutes of Association meetings, but Dr. Clarke asked the Association to buy the X-ray tank he had in the building. He also wanted to leave his surgical equipment behind for the next doctor. On the bright side, Dr. Leonard C. Labine was set to move into the building in August 1949 to open a dental practice. Unfortunately, he was soon recalled to active service in the military. Dr. Labine would later establish a long-standing dental practice in Moscow, Idaho.

By September 1949 Dr. Paul Genstler told the Association he would like to live in the upstairs apartment of the building if it could be completed. In November the Association voted to borrow \$5,000 to finish the living quarters and the apartment was ready for occupancy several months later. Dr. Genstler had vacated the apartment by September 1952, but he continued to practice medicine in Genesee into 1954. Genesee was then again in need of a doctor.

Dr. Philip D. Spechko answered the call and requested an option to rent the upstairs apartment in May 1955. Dr. Spechko's commitment to Genesee was more lasting and he probably would have stayed in the community

until retirement. He was involved in the planning and groundbreaking for a new long-term care facility in Moscow in 1962. What was initially conceived as Loma Vista Manor became Paradise Villa and more recently Aspen Park Healthcare. Unfortunately, Dr. Spechko became ill and asked the Genesee Association to find a replacement for him in February 1967. A Dr. Clarence Johnston was contacted but there was no evidence in the Association minutes that he came to practice in Genesee. Dr. Spechko died in November 1967.

Though numerous contacts and attempts were made, the Association was not able to find a new physician. The town was then without the services of a resident doctor although Dr. Wayne Peterson had a dental practice in the building from 1978 to 1985 and lived in the apartment during that time before moving his office to Moscow.

At a special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Genesee Medical and Dental Non-Profit Cooperative Association, Inc. on October 30, 1985, it was resolved "that the major asset of this Association, namely, the medical-dental building as well as the land upon which it is located be sold and/or exchanged and that this resolution be submitted to a vote at a meeting of the members hereof at a special meeting to be held at the Firemen's Hall in Genesee, Idaho, on Saturday, December 7, 1985, at 2:00 o'clock p.m." The building had not been used for the practice of medicine for 17 years and the group held no real hope that it would be so used in the future.

On August 29, 1986, the building was sold to brothers Jay and Duane Roach, Genesee residents and businessmen. Their plans were to find a doctor to restart a medical practice, but their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. They in turn sold the building to Gritman Medical Center in Moscow. Over the years the building has seen a variety of inhabitants. There was once talk of moving the city library into the basement, and the Association considered a request in October 1973 for the kindergarten to use the basement. In subsequent years much of the building was remodeled for apartments. It also housed a daycare center and the Genesee food bank for some time, and Gritman Medical Center did operate a medical clinic in the building for a few years.

The final item of business for the cooperative association was the disposition of the funds remaining in its bank account and three certificates of deposit. At another special meeting of the Board of Directors on December 2, 1986, it was resolved that "all loans to this Association by its members be paid in full as those amounts appear on the records of the Association and that all members be reimbursed their respective fees of \$25.00 paid at the time of becoming a member of this Association" and that any remaining funds be given to the Genesee School District



The Genesee Medical Center in 2006. The access ramp was built by Gritman when they operated their clinic in the building, courtesy of Earl Bennett

282 to provide scholarships for its students. The resolutions were approved by a vote of the Association members at a meeting on February 28, 1987, and by May 14, 1987, a total of \$14,065.00 had been paid to 147 members for their loans and memberships. The Certificate of Dissolution of the Association was dated September 28, 1987. A total of \$13,936.00 was given to the Genesee school district by April 11, 1988, and the Association was finally dissolved. Final officers were L. Eugene Woodruff, president, and Kenneth Aherin, secretary.

Today the neat brick building still stands at 156 W Walnut in Genesee. It still has the thick glass block windows especially requested for the surgery room in the northwest corner and a column of thick glass blocks on each side of the front door. Though the cooperative association in the long run was not able to keep a doctor in Genesee, it was not for lack of trying. When I drive by the building today, I always remember my visit to Dr. Genstler's office long, long ago when I must have had a persistent cough. Instead of the possible painful shot I had been dreading, I had my first X-ray – and it didn't hurt.

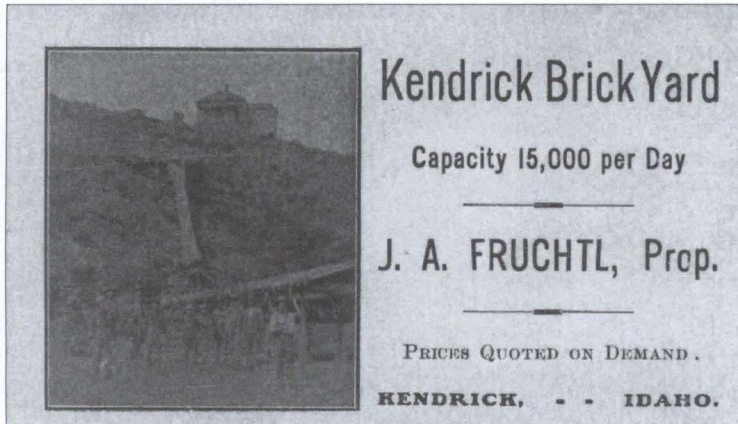
Notes:

Information for this article was drawn from the Latah County Historical Society's collection "Genesee Medical Association" and from "A Brief History of the Genesee Medical and Dental Non-Profit Cooperative Association" by Matt Cornelison (2013).

Special thanks go to Joyce Diehl, Linda Hampton, Marilyn Jenkins, Sandy Ketelson, Chuck Labine, Harry Martin, Doris Odenborg, Duane and Julie Roach, Mary Stout, and Joanne Westberg for helpful conversations.

One Brick at a Time

J-K Heritage Foundation



As a young man of twenty-one years, Joseph Fruchtl struck out on his own seeking a new life in the West. He rode the train to Spokane and walked south. Joe settled in the Genesee area in 1887 becoming a farmer there. He moved east settling in Kendrick where he established a lucrative business in brick making. He met and married Sophia Gertje in 1889. She died in childbirth at the tender age of seventeen.

Joe's brick plant and residence were located in East Kendrick. The brick factory was alongside the Northern Pacific Railroad adjacent to the Potlatch River. The factory shipped 100,000 bricks per month on the railroad and accommodated the local needs as well.

The factory was extensively damaged in the flood of 1900, which was caused by a Northern Pacific Railway locomotive which had crashed into the river, claiming five lives. The crash partially dammed the river. When chinook winds brought massive flooding, Kendrick was doomed.

After repairs, Joe was up and running again. He courted Lillie Maude Thomas and they married in October 1903. By December she was very ill with symptoms of typhoid fever and later pneumonia. In a letter to her brother John she describes Joe's business, "Joe is well and is hard at work and has loaded on cars and shipped 94,000 bricks in less than a month and has 256,000 to load yet and a kiln yet to burn. He gets \$8.75 per thousand...."

Their first daughter, Sophia, was born in 1904. That was the year that Kendrick burned in a hot August fire. Though the plant burned, Joe quickly recovered to produce bricks that were in high demand for the rebuilding of Kendrick. After the fire, the Kendrick Town Council had passed an ordinance requiring brick structures and fire walls. Joe's bricks are visible in Kendrick today, over 100 years later, in the majority of the buildings rebuilt after the fire.

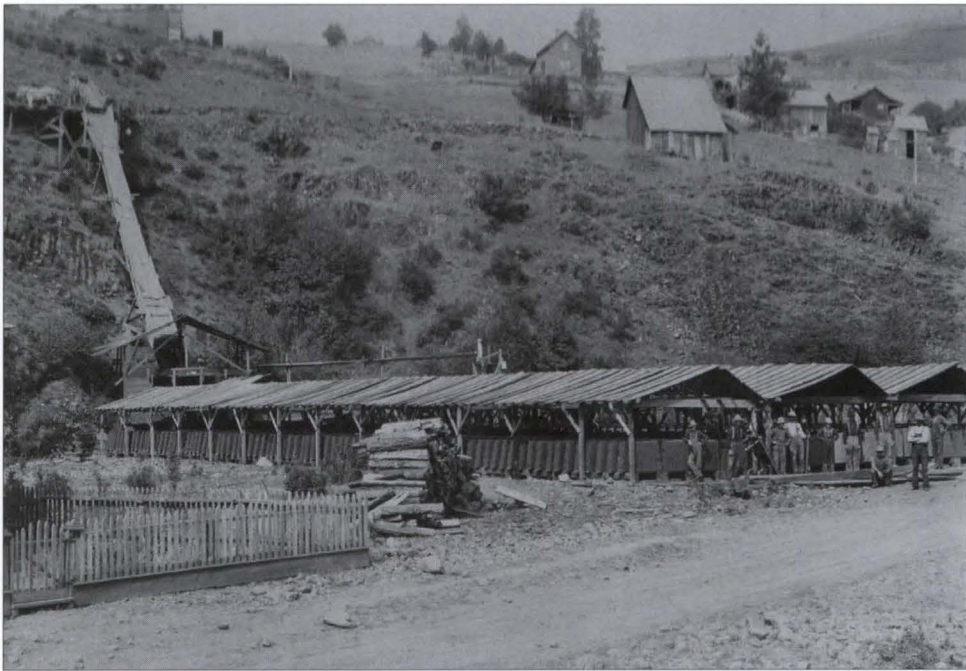
The pit where the clay was stirred was powered by horses. The clay was scooped out and put into molds that were then baked in a kiln. The factory was very labor intensive and employed many Italians who were in Kendrick at the turn of the century. Times were prosperous and Joe and his bricks were in constant demand by customers that included the University of Idaho.

Around 1911, he obtained a huge order from the University of Idaho for bricks. Perhaps the brick factory would still be operational today if Joe had not changed clay pits. The requested bricks were shipped out, but the University found small particles of rock in the bricks and refused to pay for them. It bankrupted Joe!

Joe had relocated in the Teakean area of Clearwater County and started a sawmill business by 1915. Joe and Maude added to their family in the years 1906 to 1917: two more sons, Joseph and John (Jack), and two more daughters, Mary and Ethel. The next four children, Anton, Anna, Wilbert, and Wilma, died as babies. On a cold day in November 1917 Joe lost his beloved wife Maude after the birth of Wilma.

Joe remarried in February 1919 to Susanna Maria Roth Nelson. He operated a sawmill in conjunction with his cousin Frank Wittman, who was also his brother-in-law since Lydia Wittman and his second wife Maude were sisters. After milling for twenty years, he and his wife retired to Lewiston in 1935. He was a life-long Catholic and instrumental in the construction of the Catholic Church at Southwick.

Joseph Fruchtl died September 28, 1957, and is buried in the Normal Hill Cemetery.



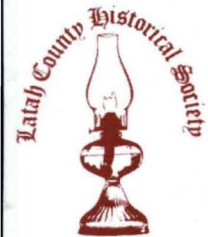
All photos courtesy of the J-K Heritage Foundation



Frank Wittman, Joe Fruchtl, John Thomas



Loading Bricks on the Northern Pacific RR



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