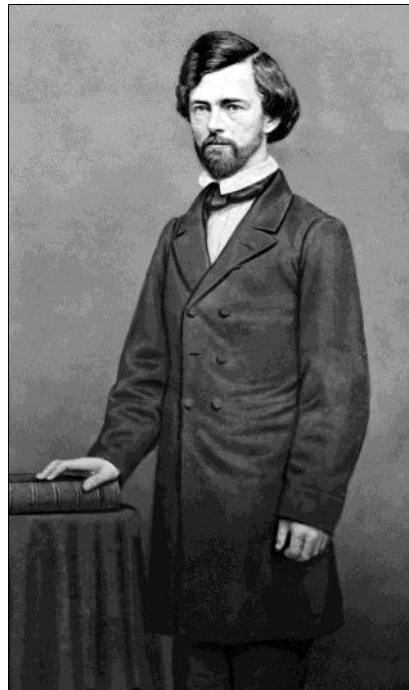
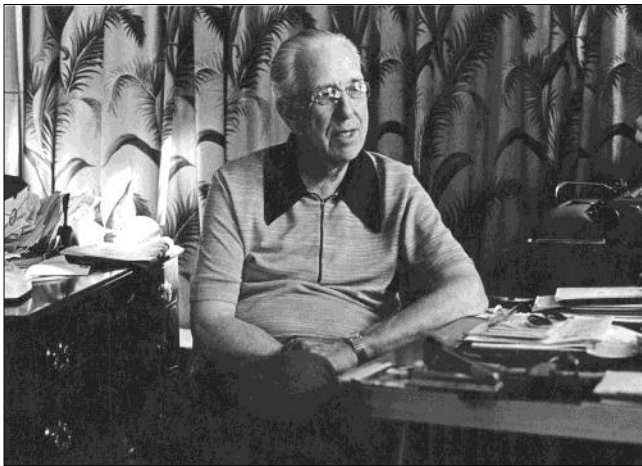


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LATAH LEGACY



The Kiva in the Sky: "A Facility Which May Never Become Obsolete", A retrospective of the University of Idaho's Kiva

An Educated Woman

For Your Listening Pleasure: Latah County Oral History Digital Collection

The Nez Perce Trails and Our First Settlements

Latah County
Historical Society



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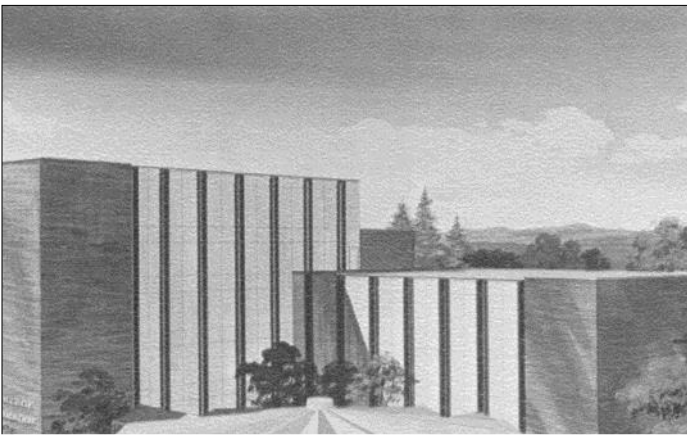
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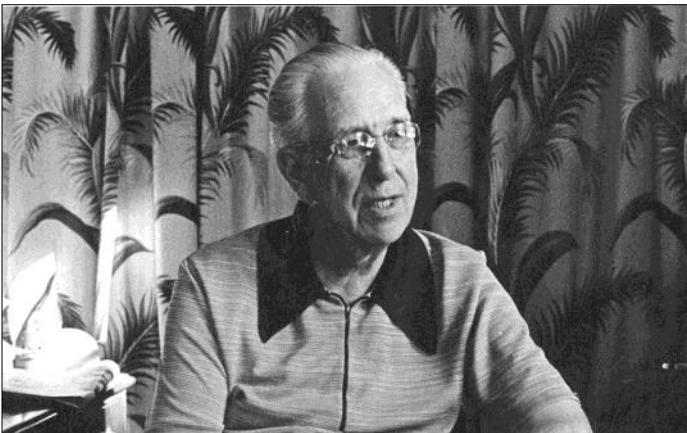


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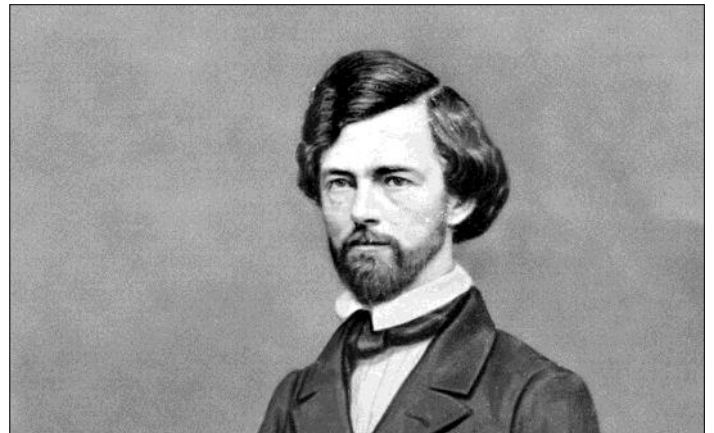


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COLLEGE
OF
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The Kiva

In the Sky

COLLEGE
OF
EDUCATION

KIVA

The Kiva facing southeast, 1969. (University of Idaho Special Collections, PG1_139-01b.)

“A Facility Which May Never Become Obsolete”

A retrospective of the University of Idaho’s Kiva

By Ariana Burns & Dusty Fleener
Palouse Anthropology*

COLLEGE
OF
EDUCATION

In the late 1960s construction began on a trio of buildings for the College of Education on the University of Idaho campus. The College's Dean, Everett Samuelson, envisioned innovative teaching and research facilities for future teachers. One of the new buildings, dubbed the Kiva, would be a multi-use space to serve not only academically but also communally, hosting entertainment activities including summer theatre. A unique piece of modernist architecture on a campus studded with gothic buildings, the Kiva was intended as "...a facility which may never become obsolete (1)." The Kiva was demolished recently to make way for the renovation of a surviving sister building. For the forty-five years that it was part of the University of Idaho it did further Samuelson's goals of innovation and research and offer entertainment for students and their families. The following, derived from historical documents and oral interviews, discusses the creation of the unusual structure, its role in the university community, and its final demise.

In the mid-1980s it was not uncommon for a University of Idaho student to receive directions for navigating campus that might involve the "big toad stool" as a landmark – officially known as the Kiva. In more recent times, the Kiva was rarely used as a guidepost because traffic on campus, as well as building use, had drifted northward and the natural landscape had grown to overpower the structure, shrouding it in obscurity.

The Kiva was a unique piece of architecture, especially on the UI campus which has focused more on a gothic look with occasional forays into modernist design. It was a dodecagonal or icositetragonal structure depending on whether the viewer counts 12 or 24 sides. Its roof was arrayed from the center to create a fluted profile and the entire building was perched atop a pedestal, looking like a recently alighted spacecraft. Companionways reached out to connect it with its sister facility, the College of Education (COE) Building, and the two comprised the College of Education Complex.

One part of a multi-building construction project (which included the COE Building and the Industrial Arts Building located on the eastern edge of campus), the Kiva had been part of the University of Idaho for almost half a century. But in 2014, it was scheduled for removal.

"The Kiva Theater is going away, certainly with conflicted feelings," said James Gregson, associate dean of the college [of Education]. "We ... really looked at ways that it could be made more structurally sound as well as more usable because it just wasn't meeting the needs" (2).

Gregson's comments were related to a long-awaited and greatly needed \$20-million renovation of the Education Building that resulted in the demolition of its companion, the Kiva.

The Kiva had evoked a gamut of emotions in the university population, encompassing delight, irritation, and—occupying the middling ground—indifference. What started out as a



The Kiva lost in the landscape, facing southeast coming from the campus core, 2014. (Photo by Burns.)

needed education venue grew into something that would embrace the university community, the city of Moscow, and occasionally outlying regions.

The School of Education was founded in 1920, became a college in 1953, and grew to play a large role at the university. By 1962 the most common major of University of Idaho students was education. Education majors numbered about 1,200 or one-quarter of the student population (3, p. 1). Edmund Chavez, former chair of the Department of Dramatics, recalled that almost all the summer courses were for returning teachers continuing their training and for students enrolled in education classes (4, pp. 10-11). In spite of this large population, the COE had the dubious honor of being the only division lacking a dedicated space (3, p. 1).

In November of 1962 a pamphlet was produced to rally support. A dedicated facility would cure several problems for the college, which included the cramped conditions in faculty offices and the need for demonstration rooms, and with new space the dean would no longer be forced to store student records out on a balcony. A new building, the pamphlet argued, was needed (3, p. 3).

Everett Samuelson was appointed Dean of the College of Education in 1963 and became a member of the education building committee. He wanted a full auditorium but the US Department of Education refused to fund it. By changing the hall to a "kiva" he was able to "finesse the project" which the Board of Regents called "Samuelson's Carousel" (5, pp. 32-33). Samuelson wanted the building—it was still thought of as one building at this point—to be a place that would serve as a focal point of education and would foster community (6, p. 1).

Ariana Burns remembered confusion among fellow students in the mid-1980s as they tried to comprehend the design: "What is that thing?" "Aren't all kivas underground?" "Why build a kiva on a pedestal?" and so on (7). Andrea Chavez, who works at the COE and performed in the Kiva as a child, jokingly answered the third question: "It was the Sixties!" Her

College of Education

Everett V. Samuelson, Dean of the College of Education, became Dean in the fall of 1963. He came to the University from the University of Colorado where he was Director of the Bureau of Research. He received his B.A. from Southwestern College, his M.S. from Kansas University and his Ph.D. degree. Dean Samuelson has contributed much time working on the new College of Education Building and he helped receive full accreditation from NCATE for programs due to the Ph.D. degree. Dean Samuelson is active in the Community in the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, Masonic groups, and the Methodist Church. His hobbies include skiing, fly fishing, and camping. Dean and Mrs. Samuelson have two children: their daughter is a sophomore in college and their boy is fourteen.



EVERETT V. SAMUELSON
Dean, College of Education

Figure 4. Gem of the Mountains Yearbook, 1968.

father Edmund Chavez added: “They liked the idea of what a Kiva was” (8).

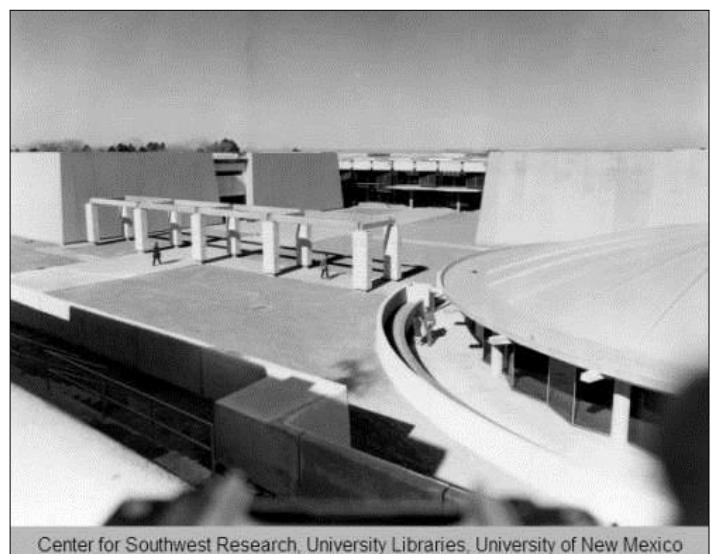
The kivas of the southwest are archaeological features that still inspire lively debate. Now thought to have served many uses, kivas were long believed to be subterranean spaces exclusively for ritual male activity (9, p. 323; 10). These rites were intended to integrate the village (11, p. 224). Samuelson, in a newspaper article, defined kivas as circular meeting halls, fashioned after New Mexico native council chambers. *The Spokesman-Review* quoted an unnamed university official (and apparently a wag): “Kiva is a word Pueblo Indians used for a pit where they went to get away from their wives....” and added “architects now use it to describe a ceremonial meeting place” (12).

It may be that—wags aside—the committee wanted to bring the idea of kivas as a place where people came together to learn from each other. The proposed design involved a historical grounding in an older style of architecture that had been serviceable in the past and it embraced future technology in meeting educational needs. Samuelson told the architects to incorporate the kiva into the design (13) using the kiva lecture halls at Michigan State University and the University of New Mexico as examples (14, pp. 14-15).

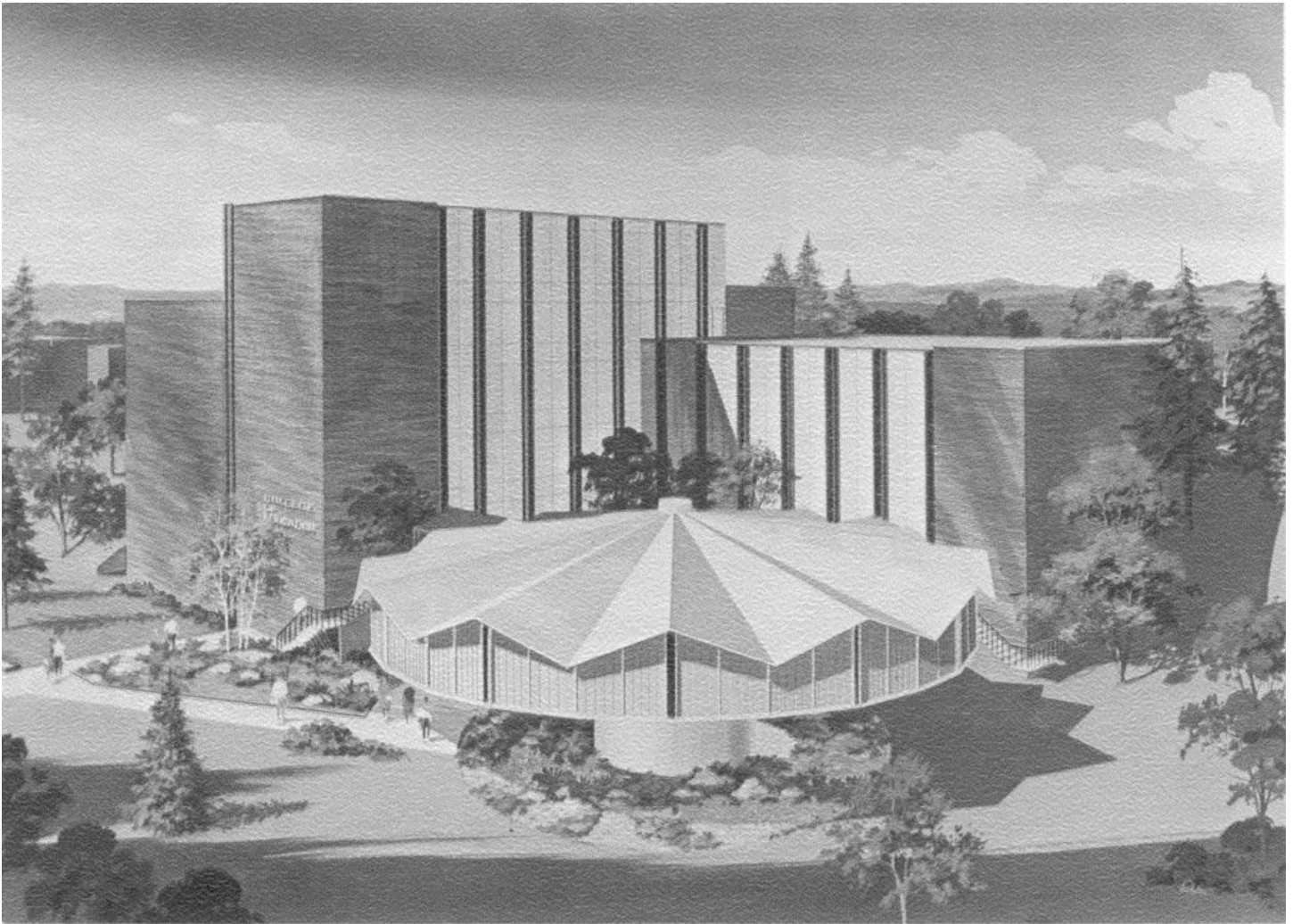
The early discussions were compiled in an undated proposal written before 1966 (based on references within the proposal itself). Prepared by the building committee and the college faculty, the document envisioned what the Education Building should be without the limiting factors of geographic or pecuniary constraints. These factors would come into play later (14, p. 3). The proposal opened with the intent of describing what the space should be, not how it should be:



Inspiration for the Kiva, Michigan State University's Lecture Hall, n.d. (<http://rivchurch.com/locations-and-service-times/msu>.)



Inspiration for the Kiva, University of New Mexico's Kiva Lecture Hall, 1960s. UNM Archives, Center for Southwest Research, Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque.



Architect's rendering of the College of Education Building, 1967. The rendering looks northeast and shows the Kiva nestled in beside the Education Building. (University of Idaho Special Collections, PG1_139-07.)

This report makes little reference to site. It is hoped that the site will provide adequate room for future expansion, playground space for special education classes, parking for special education pupils and outpatient treatment for the mental health center, vocational rehabilitation and other activities which cannot be identified at this time. The suggested plans for the building include provisions for some programs which serves [sic] the entire university rather than the professional programs in the College of Education (14, p 3).

The proposal laid the groundwork for the COE design and was intended to influence the final site selection rather than having the site determine the building. Even with these caveats, there were physical requirements in the proposal which refers to a lecture hall which may originally have been designed to be below ground. The writers recommended a "ground floor location for the kiva to allow excavation of several floors without infringing on the upper levels" (14, p. 6).

The room would have a circular design and four concentric levels with each level wide enough to

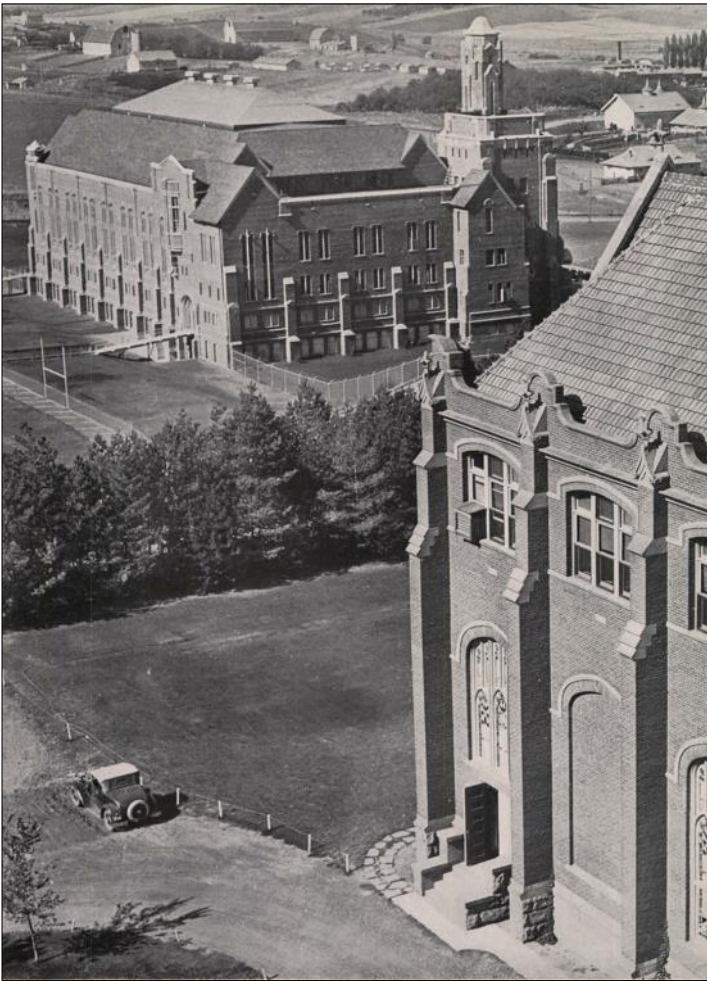
accommodate tables and chairs. The top level would have approximately a 38 to 40 foot radius, the lowest level about a 10 foot radius; and there would be 8 to 9 feet of seating width on levels 2, 3 and 4 (14, p. 15).

Thought was also given to the activities to be held in the Kiva as well as the mood the auditorium was intended to evoke.

This is a large group instructional space which should be pleasant, attractive, and flexible enough to accommodate such educational functions as large group lectures, professional meetings, class group meetings, team teaching, demonstration teaching, large group-small group discussions, and educational honoraries [sic] (14, pp. 14-15).

A 1968 press release stated the Kiva (then envisioned as a 400-seat circular auditorium) would host evening programs as well as theatrical performances and group discussions (15). Intended for the community as well as the university, Samuelson wanted the facility to move beyond theory and host innovative teaching and research (6, p. 1).

By 1966 the State Permanent Building Fund Advisory Council agreed to fund the \$1.8 million construction costs.



Above: Looking to the west, the tree lines and the field before it mark where the TCs would stand and then the Education Complex. The Administration Building in the foreground and Memorial Gym in the back, 1932. (University of Idaho Special Collections, Gem Annual 1932:11.)



Top Right: Looking to the North. On the left is MacLean Field with stadium seating, in the center are the TC 1 & 2, and on the right is the Administration Building and Annex, 1950s. University of Idaho Special Collections, PG1_002-13.



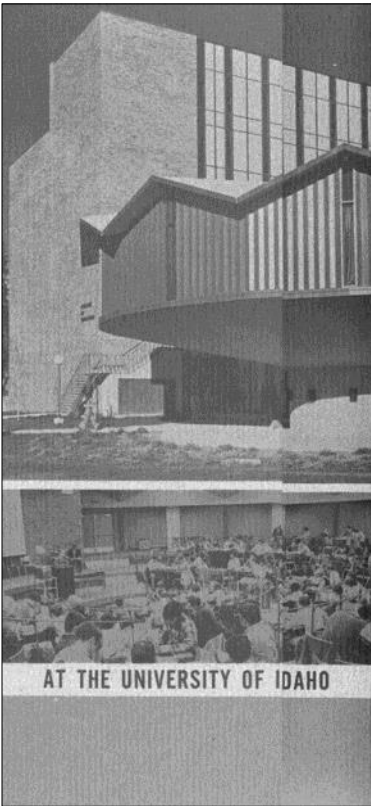
Bottom Left: The Kiva and the COE Building under construction March 1968. Memorial Gym is in background. (University of Idaho Special Collections, PG1_139-10.)

Architect Chet Shawver with Hummell, Hummell, Jones, and Shawver out of Boise was authorized to proceed (12). Instead of one, there would be three buildings which were to become some of the “most flexibly designed buildings on campus” (15).

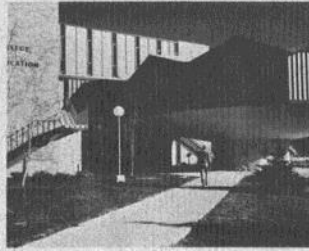
It was decided that the Education Complex would be built between the Administration Building and Memorial Gym, perched on a corner of MacLean Field which had been used for athletic events, military drills, and other activities (16). Along with taking over a section of MacLean Field, the chosen location required the removal of several temporary classrooms (TC). These TC buildings had been purchased after World War II to accommodate the increase in students following the creation of the GI Bill. Rafe Gibbs, in his book *Beacon for Mountain and Plain*, wrote that University President Buchanan never wanted the buildings for long-term use, and the names reflect that intent (17, p. 309).

Construction began in 1967 (18) and the impact of the pile drivers was felt literally, not only by the surrounding building occupants but also on the far side of MacLean Field where the university summer theatre group rehearsed in the Field House. Chavez remembered the challenges of rehearsing near the construction:

At the time that the Kiva and the Education Building was being built our summer program was in full swing in the Field House.... The pounding rattled both the Field House and all of us who were there trying to rehearse. One of the plays that we did that summer was SOUND OF MUSIC. I directed this musical. It was a major hit and we decided to [do] an afternoon performance. So off I went to talk to the supervisor to see if he could help us with the noise of the pile driver. He looked at me for a moment and said that he thought something could be done. I found out later that he called the crews together and asked them if they would help us out. They said yes and offered to come in early to work. They came in at five in the morning and quit at two in the



AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO



MAIN BUILDING

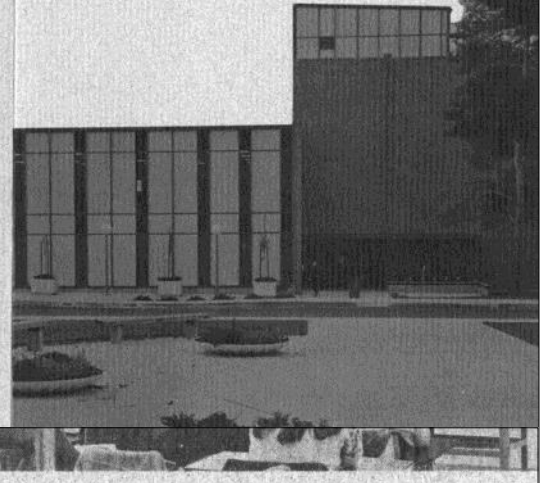
Area:	
First Floor	12,312 S.F.
Second Floor	11,872 S.F.
Kiva	4,860 S.F.
Third Floor	11,712 S.F.
Fourth Floor	11,768 S.F.
Fifth Floor	7,040 S.F.
Mechanical Room	2,670 S.F.
Total Area	61,976 S.F.
Construction Cost Per Square Foot	\$25.97
Total Project Cost, Including Equipment	\$1,763,416

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION BUILDING

Area:	12,100 S.F.
Construction Cost Per Square Foot	\$14.89
Total Project Cost, Including Equipment	\$225,913

The General Contractor for the Main Building was Vern Johnson Construction Company, Spokane, and for the Industrial Education Building, C. & S. Builders, Pullman, Wash. For both buildings, the Mechanical Contractor was Drake Heating and Plumbing, Boise, and the Electrical Contractor, Bobbett Electric and Refrigeration, Idaho Falls. Hummel, Hummel, Jones and Shawver, Boise, served as the Architects for both buildings.

APRIL 23, 1970 **COLLEGE OF EDUCATION COMPLEX DEDICATION**
UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO



Modern teaching and research techniques are possible in the College of Education Complex at the University of Idaho. Architects worked closely with Dr. Everett V. Samuelson, dean of the College of Education, and his faculty in conceiving a facility which may never become obsolete.



Bottom Left: Edmund Chavez, Chair of Dramatics Department. (Gem of the Mountains Yearbook, 1952.)

Top & Inset: Dedication program. Inset to right is text from the program. (University of Idaho Special Collections.)

afternoon so that we could do the play. About half of the crew came over to watch the play and many of them returned with their families. It always gives you a nice feeling when someone helps and the end result is something that many enjoy (4, p. 6).

Samuelson's idea of fostering community via the Kiva was becoming a reality even before construction was completed. The buildings were finished in 1969 (18). The need for them was great enough that they were occupied and in use before

the dedication ceremony which took place the following year on April 23, 1970. Lois Samuelson still remembered the ceremony: "What a happy time!" (13).

With the education component up and running, Dean Samuelson moved on to further incorporate the communal and entertainment pieces and invited the summer theatre program to make use of the Kiva (19). When his invitation was made, summer theatre was performing in the Field House and had been doing so for about fourteen years.

The Field House was a recycled building from Farragut Naval Base north of Moscow with an earth floor and no ventilation or restrooms. Hard rains on the tin roof made it impossible to hear performances (4, p. 6; 19). The opportunity to work in a new facility was enticing, to say the least. Perhaps it is needless to write that the summer theatre program accepted the invitation.

This wasn't the beginning of a new relationship. Summer theatre already received support from COE to help entertain its students during the week (4, pp. 10-11). When Friday arrived, everyone left town for Coeur d'Alene Lake or other destinations, Andrea Chavez remembered (8).



Forrest Sears, Drama Department faculty, leads an acting exercise. The lowest level of the floor is temporarily plugged to create a 24' acting area, 1969. (University of Idaho Special Collections, PG 20.)

With permission from COE and the University, some modifications were made to adapt the space for theatre performance. The physical plant engineer knew that Chavez was skilled in carpentry and that he could be trusted, so he permitted the temporary alterations. Chavez built removable decking to fill the lowest tier. He also constructed masking flats to surround the perimeter of the Kiva and allow for multiple exits. Andrea remembered one production where a man was to exit, get caught in a rainstorm, and re-enter. He would exit, step into a bucket, and get water dumped on him, and then re-enter. One performance he got hit with ice water. “Because it’s theatre” (8).

Samuelson paid for technical modifications and theatrical lights and assigned classrooms for the group.

We were given three classrooms for dressing and makeup. We all managed to survive the use of the Kiva with rehearsals during the day and performances at night and the noise that all this created along with

classes and the normal working of the rest of the building. Dean Samuelson deserves a special thanks for this help (4, p. 6).

Theatre’s offices were in the U-Hut a short distance away. It was there that sets and costumes were constructed and equipment was stored (4, p. 6).

The Kiva’s first summer theatre season was in 1969 and opened with *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by Chavez. The Kiva was home to summer theatre until 1974 when the Hartung Theatre (known then as the Performing Arts Center) was completed (4, p. 6; 20, p. 1C).

Lois Samuelson recalled that the Kiva was “a sought after lecture hall, so much so that professors had a difficult time scheduling times for their classes” (13). Andrea Chavez attended a mass communication course there, and Burns a U.S. history class as well as a Nez Perce drumming circle arranged by an anthropology instructor (7, 8). James Logan with the Registrar’s Office said that between 1996 and 2014



Above: Grace Kelly leads a clinic at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, 2014. (Photo by University of Idaho Photo Services.)

Right: Theatre class, participants unidentified. The floor has been permanently leveled and risers added for removable, tiered seating, 2011. (<http://www.uidaho.edu/class/theatre/facilities>.)

the Kiva provided space for 328 unique classes and 50 events varying from one-offs to multi-day (21).

The Kiva was also used for teen conferences, dance theatre shows, and the juggling club. It served as a clinic site during the annual Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival where jazz techniques were demonstrated and discussed as part of jazz education, which is a central piece of the Festival. Ethnomusicologist Ray Briggs, guitarist Corey Christiansen, and vocalist Dee Daniels were among the professionals who held clinics there (22).

Though designed for flexibility, the Kiva could prove to be a difficult place to work in. Nels Reese, now professor emeritus in architecture, did not like to lecture without seeing everyone at once (6, p. 6). Chavez remembered multimedia controls being in another room. A technician or teacher's assistant was needed to run the equipment for a smooth lecture. He thought some of the problems may have stemmed from the space being designed by administrators and lacking input from people who would actively use it. He quipped, riffing off of *Death of a Salesman*, that the Kiva "was liked. Just not well liked" (8).

The Kiva would receive another remodel to prepare for the later return of the Theatre Department. The Department's U-Hut which housed their offices and their small theatre was being demolished in 2000 to make way for the Idaho Commons (23). This time the Kiva would host theatre year-round instead of only in the summers.

Structural changes to the building were daunting. Since any work that might disturb the asbestos required abatement, alterations were limited by this concern. The signature pit was filled in, making the floor one level. The railings were removed along with the desks, and simple chairs were



brought in. A larger light system and curtains were installed, creating a 120-seat performance space (2, p. 1). The transformation flipped the Kiva from a lecture hall that could also be used as a performance space to a performance space that could also be used for lectures. The new arrangement proved awkward for non-theatre classes. Students had to take notes seated in chairs that did not have desk-wings. Logan said the hall was no longer considered a multimedia room (21). After 2004 it was primarily used by the Theatre Department and for special one-off events.

Over time the Theatre Department came to find the Kiva's location limiting. The footprint of the new College of Business Albertson Building took up a good portion of the nearby parking lot. The resulting change required patrons to cover a greater distance on foot to reach the theatre. Eventually Theatre would transfer all productions to the Hartung Theatre or the Shoup Hall Arena (24).

Finally a thorough renovation of the College of Education Complex could no longer be avoided. The COE building needed asbestos abatement, the exterior needed tending to before it fell off of its own accord, and infrastructure needed upgrading to allow for new technologies (8, 25). "We wanted



Kiva demolition, 2014. (Photo by Amber Ziegler.)

to take advantage of this opportunity to make it a special building,” Gregson said (2, p. 2). This feeling was in keeping with the intent of the originating building committee back in 1966 to create an innovative educational facility.

Unfortunately, when the buildings were evaluated for renovation it was determined that updating the Kiva was not feasible. The decision was announced that the structure was going away. “Essentially we had engineers and architects give it a really strong analysis, and it was unanimous that it should come down,” Gregson said (2, p. 2).

At this writing, it has not been decided what will take the Kiva’s place. There has been discussion of a garden or an atrium, something Gregson hopes will “align with the spirit of the Kiva—to promote a sense of community” (2, p. 2).

What began as a building to fill a need within the COE became a space that served many. People were brought together in an exchange of ideas and understanding through a variety of means whether it was musical demonstration, theatrical performance or oratory lecture. The Kiva was an unusual building. For forty-five years it brought an historic style of space to the present, recreating the fire and ritual of learning, and also was a touchstone for many during their

careers at the University of Idaho. Samuelson declared it a success in its mission to entertain, inspire, educate and inform (6, p. 1).

** Palouse Anthropology is a group of researchers interested in preserving the micro-history of the Palouse through the collection and compilation of historical artifacts and oral histories for the benefit of researchers and future generations. palouseanthro@gmail.com*

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CLASS OF 1898 (left to right): Ollie M. McConnell (Mrs. Max Lueddemann), Charles Simpson, Edward Smith, Margaret McCallie (Mrs. Fred Cushing Moore), Lola Margaret Knepper, Clara Ransom (Mrs. Sterling Price Davis, Marcus Whitman Barnett)

The 1898 graduating class from the University of Idaho in Moscow. (University of Idaho)

An Educated Woman

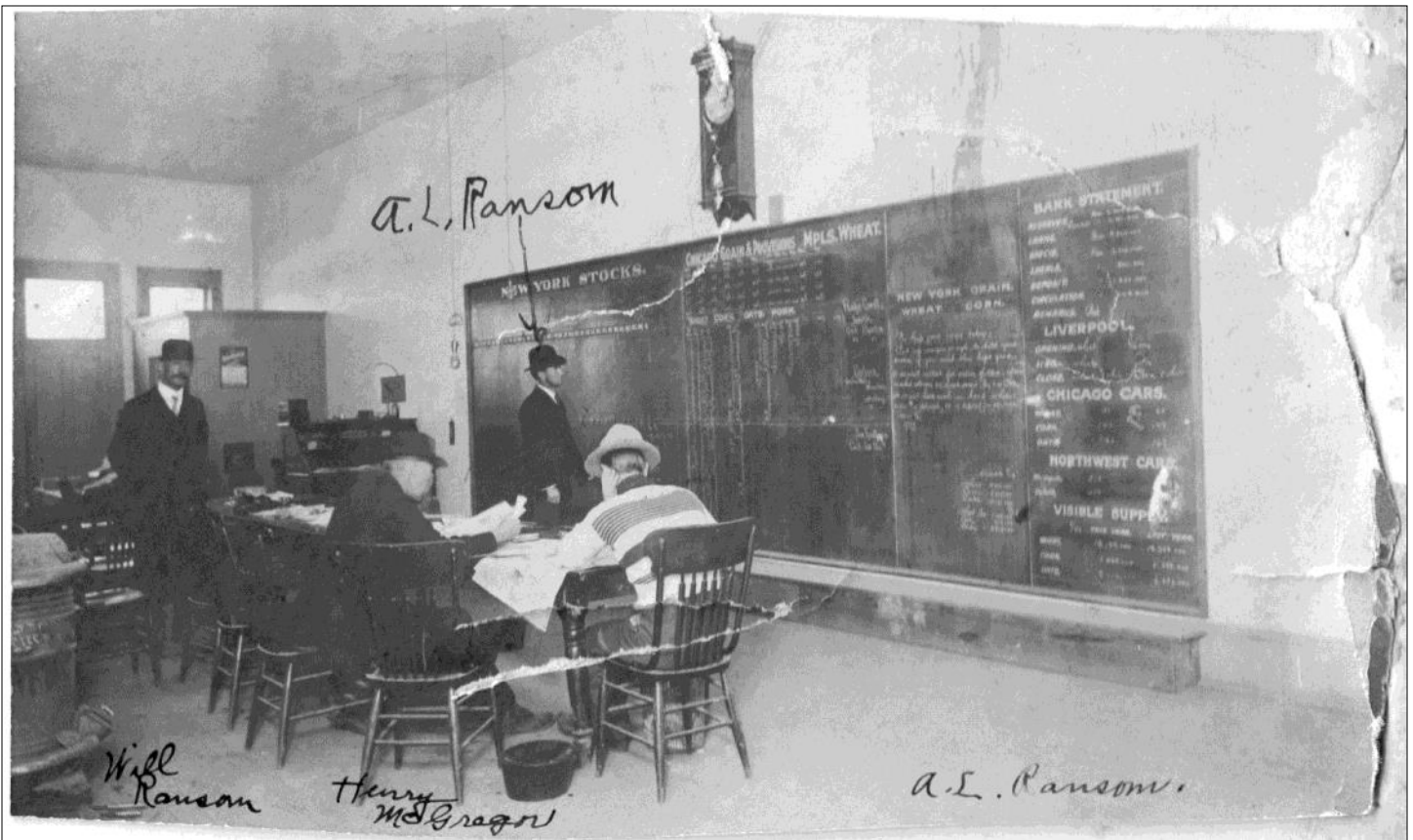
By Eilene Lyon

Western white pine (*Pinus monticola*): *Large tree (150 – 180 ft.) which may be clear of branches for 70 ft. or more of its height. Best developed forms found in Northern Idaho. Somewhat drought tolerant. Distinctive for its neat whorls of horizontal branches. Idaho state tree.*

In 1898 my maternal great-grandmother, Clara Pearl Ransom, received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Idaho, becoming the first of five generations of college-educated women (so far). Clara Ransom was in the third class to graduate from that institution in Moscow, Idaho. More than two decades later, she secured a fellowship at the University and in 1922 earned a Master's degree in botany. The subject had been of interest to her since her teen years.

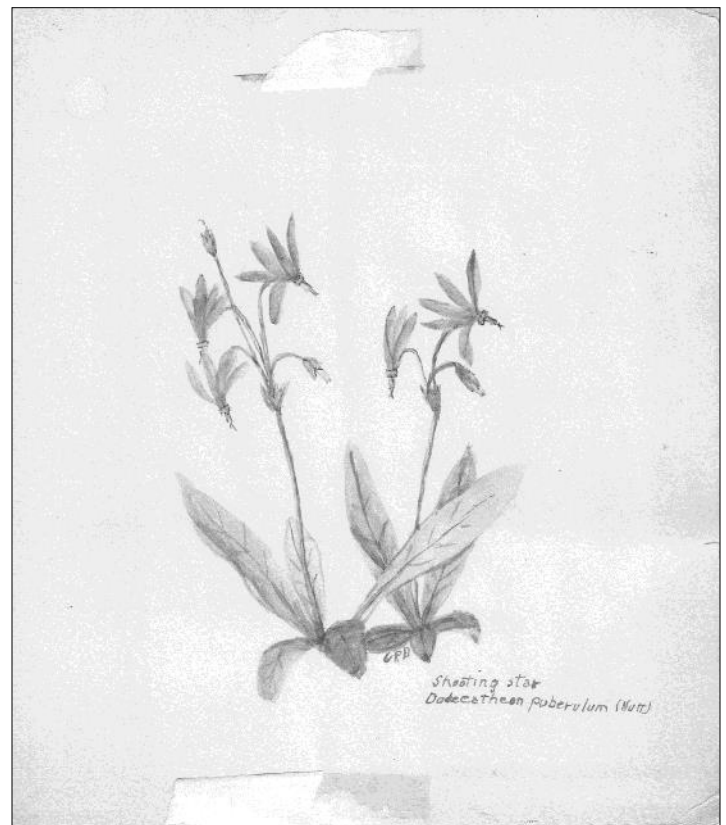
Many an educated woman in the early 20th century was forced to make a choice: family or career. Women were often relegated to the home territory even though they were capable of doing more lucrative things. Clara had an opportunity early in life to be a big fish in a small pond, but as the pond grew larger around her, she felt diminished by circumstance. Despite being stymied in her career, she found ways to make an impact on many generations of scholars to come.

Moscow was a city of 4,000 in 1898. "The city has an abundant supply of artesian water and electric lights. There are several well sustained churches and excellent public schools. The altitude is about 2,700 feet, the air pure and invigorating and the climate healthful... There is no better climate for effective study," boasts the school catalog.¹ Tuition at the



Above: Arthur Lemon Ransom in his office at the railroad (University of Idaho)

Right: One of Clara Ransom Davis' botanical illustrations, done in watercolor. Shooting star (*Dodecatheon puberulum*) Nutt. Courtesy of David Wickward.



university was free for state residents. They could expect to pay about \$125 per school year for room and board in town. Books were \$3 to \$10 per term. Extra fees were charged for lab work, professional courses and music lessons. For example, 12 weeks of private 1-hour violin lessons, two per week, cost \$30.¹

leaf scar: A scar left on a twig when a leaf falls.²

Clara Pearl Ransom's parents were Emma Jenkins and Robert Ransom, who were both born in Ohio to pioneer families. They met in the small community of Camden, in eastern Indiana, where their families had moved in the 1830s and 1840s. Two of Emma's siblings married two of Robert's siblings, so there were close ties between the Jenkins and Ransom families. Emma's parents were both Quakers when she was born, but her father later became a Methodist. Robert Ransom was also a Methodist and a very religious man who served as a lay preacher in the church. Some of his teachings proved to be quite unpopular and family rumor has it that he was nearly lynched at one point because of it.

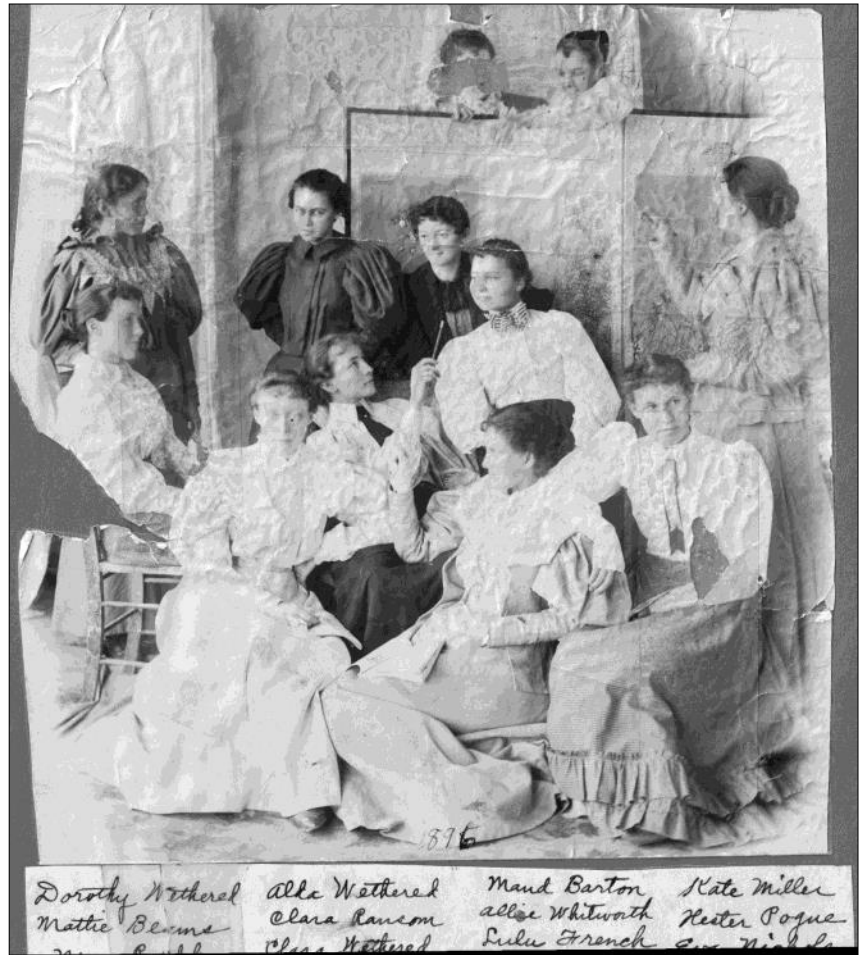
Robert and Emma Ransom had 13 children, but great misfortune in raising them to adulthood.

Three little girls died in 1862 of scarlet fever and measles. A pair of twins were stillborn in 1866, a year-old son died in 1868, and a daughter lived a mere 10 days in 1873. By the time Clara Pearl, the last, was born in January 1877, her

parents had been through a world of grief. It would be understandable if Robert and Emma had begun to close off their hearts to the youngest of their children. Perhaps this was the beginning of the lack of affection that seems to have come down through the generations in my maternal line.

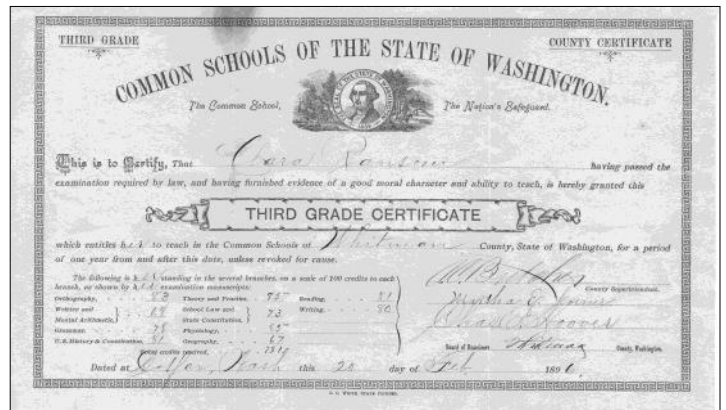


Above: Clara Ransom's high school graduation portrait, 1894. (University of Idaho)



Top Right: Clara Ransom posing in character as a "school ma'am" with other teachers in 1896. Clara is in the center waving her pencil. (University of Idaho)

Right: One of Clara Ransom's teaching certificates, this one for Whitman County, Washington. (Latah County Historical Society)



When Clara was about four, her father decided to move the family to Independence, Kansas, where he went into the mercantile business with a brother and brother-in-law. He became highly respected in the small community in a short time. However, his successes came to an abrupt halt. While serving jury duty during a cold, wet period in February 1883, he contracted pneumonia and died within a week. Robert's death was yet another terrible blow for Emma. Both her parents had died just the year before. Now she was far from home in Kansas with her remaining children: Jim (27), William (19), Arthur (13), Emma (11), Fred (8), and Clara (6).

With Emma's and Robert's parents no longer living, Emma would have had no reason to return to Indiana. Jim and William were old enough to help with her younger children. Emma Jenkins Ransom never remarried. When Arthur began working as a telegrapher for the railroad, he moved to Moscow, Idaho. The rest of the family, except daughter Emma, followed during the period from 1889 to 1892.

nectary: [*Gk. nektar, the drink of the gods*]: *In angiosperms, a gland that secretes nectar, a sugary fluid that attracts animals to plants.*

Young Clara Ransom was a slender, brown-haired beauty with a broad forehead, bright eyes, with well-formed nose and lips. She developed poise and a serious demeanor at an early age. As a student at Moscow High School, Clara excelled at her studies. She took seven or eight subjects each month including writing, botany, and civil government. Her report card for the 1891 school year includes "Phys" (Physical Culture, as physical education was known then) and a grade for "Deportment." All of her marks were in the high 90s.³ Clara was graduated with two other girls from Moscow High in 1894 and began her university courses later that year.

When she was just sixteen, Clara taught a school term out on Texas Ridge (aka Big Bear Ridge) south of Deary. One of Clara's students there was Elmer J. Davis and she boarded with the Davis family during her time there. One of Elmer's



Above: The Russell school (top) and the teachers and students (bottom), including Clara Ransom. (University of Idaho)

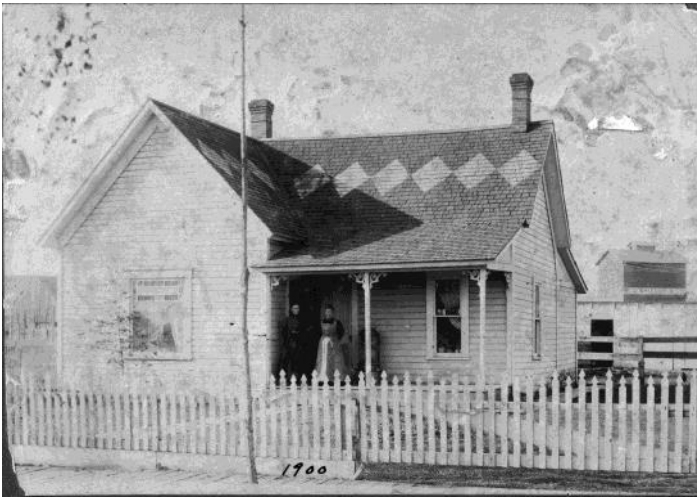
Right: Merchant's Carnival, 1892. Clara Ransom with dress decorated in silverware and jewelry in front of a sign for Rawson Bros. Jewelers. Margaret McCallie holding a feather duster in front of a sign advertising McConnell-Maguire Co. General Merchandise. (University of Idaho) Note: Julie R. Monroe featured this photo on the back cover of her book, *Moscow: Living and Learning on the Palouse*.

older brothers, Sterling Price Davis, was charmed by the young “school ma’am,” despite being ten years her senior. Clara was flattered by his attentions, but she wasn’t ready to marry. Continuing her education was her top priority.

Clara once wrote a newspaper article about Latah County schools in the early days. She claimed that in many ways, an eighth-grade education back then was at least as good, or superior to, what was happening in college at the time she wrote the article. She tells about getting her first teaching job:

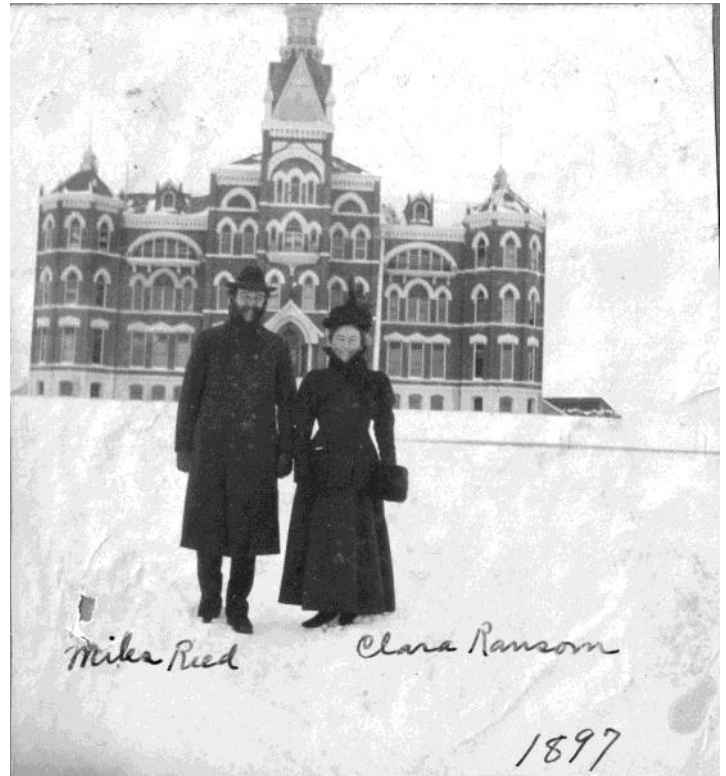
“There was no age limit for the teacher. All that was required was the ability to pass the teacher’s examinations and secure third, second or first grade certificates. A school ma’am of sixteen years, who had not yet finished high school secured her certificate and a school in 1893 in Texas Ridge in Latah County. ...The late H. R. Smith who was then county superintendent...sent the young woman to the Buck horn district, saying she appeared unafraid and





Above: Clara and her mother on the porch of their home on Washington St. about 1900. (University of Idaho)

Right: Miles Reed (1872 – 1918) and Clara Ransom in front of the University of Idaho administration building in 1897. (University of Idaho) Note: This is my favorite photo of Clara, because of her warm smile – rare in photos of her.



might not be frightened at the country roads that ran through creeks and canyons and in places clung to the steep hillside. The little log school house had few windows. It had home made [sic] desks and benches, several painted planks for black boards, and the teachers chair was a sawed off piece of log.”⁴

Beginning in 1895, Clara taught in school district No. 53 in Whitman County, Washington, west of Moscow. She also kept up with her studies at the university, graduating with honors in 1898. Her fellow graduates included Ollie M. McConnell (Mrs. Max Lueddemann), Charles Simpson, Edward Smith, Margaret McCallie (Mrs. Fred Cushing Moore), Lola Margaret Knepper, and Marcus Whitman Barnett. There would have been more men attending the school, but many had gone off to the Philippines to serve in the Spanish-American War.

After graduation, Clara began teaching at the Russell School in Moscow, the first school established in the town. The original two-story building was erected in 1883 on land donated by John Russell. It was expanded in 1888. This building burned down in 1912.⁵ Clara had a hobby as a watercolor painter. Some of her paintings are botanical illustrations, and she also did landscapes. At one time, she created a collection of notable buildings in Moscow, most of which no longer exist, such as Barton House which stood where Hotel Moscow is today, and McGregor House, where Gritman Memorial Hospital now stands. The early Russell schools were also among her subjects.

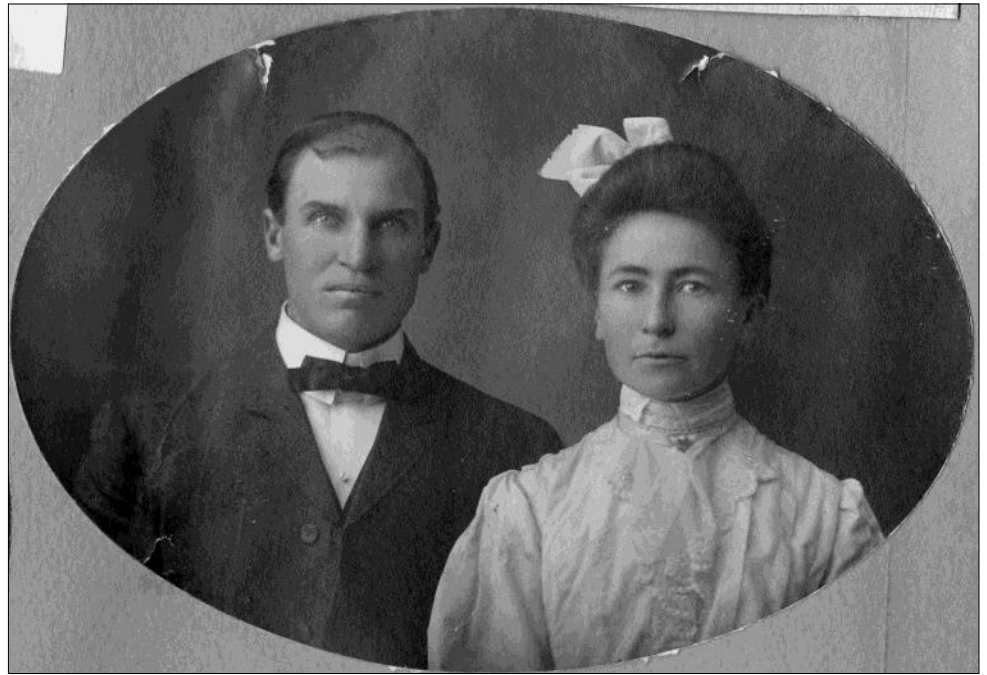
Timothy (*Phleum pratense*): *A tufted grass named for its promoter Timothy Hansen (1720). Native of Eurasia and introduced widely throughout cool-temperate regions as a pasture staple.*

Around 1900 when Clara was in her early 20s, she filed a homestead claim near Orofino at the urging of her brother, William, who had a claim nearby. The land lay along a

branch of the Clearwater River and was heavily timbered in pine, fir and cedar. She relished the idea of owning property and put in the hard work required to improve it. The Homestead Act of 1862 was a nearly egalitarian piece of legislation. It encouraged any head-of-household to stake a claim, including single or widowed women, and even newly-arrived immigrants. She wrote about those homesteading days:

“We rode sixty-five miles on horseback over those wonderful foothills of the mountains, studded here and there with groves of pine and fir trees. The road was not much more than a trail, clinging in places to the bare and rocky banks of the river where we could look down over steep bluffs of brownish red and hazy purple and yellow to the water several hundred feet below... My brother had built a log cabin on his claim and now, with the help of a neighbor, we built mine. In those days, twenty years ago, some western women still used sidesaddles; and I was one. With a rope attached to the horns of this saddle we dragged many of the logs into place for the cabin. It was rather hard on the saddle, but a satisfaction to me to assist in the work on my own domain... As we lived on our claim from year to year, when not compelled to be away at work, we gradually improved it. We planted an orchard, set out berries and grapevines which grew well in the lower places near the river. We stretched fences, built barns, cleared more acres to add to the producing meadow and scattered timothy seed in the open spots for summer range.”⁶

One Christmas, she and William decided to walk five miles into the homesteads from the nearby town, through a light snow, carrying provisions for a couple weeks. A neighbor



Left: Lewis Wesley Nixon (1871 – 1965) in a portrait taken ca. 1902. (University of Idaho)

Right: Sterling Price Davis and Clara Pearl Ransom wedding photo, 1905. (Latah County Historical Society)

remarked, “Well, that young woman deserves her claim, if she makes such trips to earn it.”⁶ Her patent for 160 acres was attained in 1904. She acquired another 80 acres from the government in the same region in 1908. Clara’s passion for buying and selling real estate had begun and was a stable source of income for the rest of her life.

Mountain goldenpea (*Thermopsis montana*): *Thrives in areas with disturbed or degraded soils by means of nitrogen-fixing by the roots. A highly competitive plant, it can withstand heavy grazing, and regenerate after fire.*

Clara had several suitors over the years. One was a barber, name unknown. But he contracted tuberculosis and was therefore not a viable match. A photo of her in front of the University in 1897 shows her side by side with Miles Reed. The broad, genuine smile on her face (a rare sight in photos of Clara) attests to the fact that they were close friends, but I do not know that things were ever more serious than that. Miles went on to become president of the State Academy at Pocatello (now Idaho State University). Their common interest in education was likely a bond between Clara and Miles.

The most serious of her attractions, and possibly the love of her life, was Lewis Wesley Nixon. Nixon was a Methodist minister who traveled to meet his obligations to the church. By 1902, Clara had assumed responsibility for raising her niece and nephew, Clara and Roy Hockett, and at that point stability was important to them. Perhaps Clara also felt that Nixon was not ready for an instant family. But though they married other people, Clara and “L.W.” remained lifelong friends.

While Clara spent her summers on the homestead, she still had to earn a living by teaching in the Moscow schools. Clara obtained letters of reference from employers in 1902, perhaps in anticipation of seeking the office of county superintendent of schools. The current superintendent, E. H. Murray wrote:

“Miss Clara Ransom has taught four successive years in the Moscow schools...the last year under my supervision. I can scarcely pay Miss Ransom a tribute strong enough to do her justice. Her work has been excellent in every respect. She is thoroughly conscientious, systematic and self sacrificing, devoting all her energies toward accomplishing the best results. Holding the esteem of her pupils, she stimulates them to their best efforts... Any Board of Education that secures her services may well be congratulated as she is unquestionably one of the strongest all round teachers in the northwest.”⁷

In 1903, she was elected to the position she sought. Her article on early schools also mentions this work: “The county superintendent of schools drove over the county with horse and buggy, and one woman superintendent rode from school to school, horseback, using the customary side saddle of the 90’s. The county superintendents salary was seventy five dollars a month.”⁴ Clara was still serving in this capacity in 1905, and undoubtedly pleased with her position and accomplishments, when she agreed to a drastic change in circumstances.

anther [*Gk. anthos, flower*]: *the pollen-bearing portion of a stamen.*

Near the end of her first term as county school superintendent, a blast from her past arrived. Around 1904, Sterling Davis sought her out on her homestead and renewed their acquaintance. The romancing was on! Sterling and



Left: A landscape watercolor by Clara Ransom Davis. Courtesy of Sylvia Halse.

Right: Sterling Davis, June Davis, Clara Ransom Davis and Clare Davis, ca. 1930. Collection of the author.

Clara procured their marriage license in Nez Perce County at Lewiston on June 1, 1905, and were married in Moscow on June 4th. Sterling was 37 and Clara was 28 years old. “They went to Spokane for their honeymoon, had a great time, and never again spent money so lavishly,” remarked their daughter, Clare Smith.

Once Clara had agreed to marriage, her hopes for a career in education were dashed. Married women were not welcome in the Latah County schools. Clara probably knew she was giving up the opportunity to continue as superintendent, but perhaps she didn’t realize that the teaching profession would be permanently closed to her. You can sense the ambivalence when you read her poem, “Duty.” It almost seems that she may have regretted her choice. She hints at two conflicting duties and she chooses to stay focused on the one at home.

DUTY

How I glory
 In the impulse
 That holds me
 To my duty.
 Shall I seek
 This honor?
 Shall I follow
 This endeavor?
 No -----
 My family needs me.
 I will tarry here
 Live my life at home,
 And do my duty.

The office of superintendent wasn’t Clara’s only elected post in the county. After obtaining her graduate degree from the

University in 1922, Clara was determined to continue having an impact on the education community. No women had served on the school board since 1912. In 1924, Clara and a Mrs. Laney ran for seats on the board. Apparently, this was a “hot” topic and there were two active organizations, one trying to keep women off the board and one to get them elected. Despite a rainy election day, the turnout was high and both women won their seats.⁸

grafting: A union of different individuals in which a portion, called the scion, of one individual is inserted into a root or stem, called the stock, of the other individual.

Sterling and Clara were a study in contrasts. She was educated, he was not. He was extremely tidy and organized, she was sloppy and a bit of a hoarder, particularly of books. She liked life in town, he preferred the farm. But their daughter, Clare, said they were “congenial” and that Mom probably helped Dad with his reading. They worked well together as a team and prospered.

At the time of their marriage, Sterling was working for a livery stable in Moscow and the couple lived in town for several years before purchasing a farm about 6 miles northeast of town. There was a small house and barn, a good spring, some timber, and the rest was in cultivation. Sterling loved horses and had a fine pair of Percherons for farm work. He was a successful breeder and his horses were in demand. Sterling was not educated in a formal sense, but he taught himself through his love of reading.

Sterling made most of his money by growing alfalfa hay and selling it to the University for their livestock. When it was time to harvest the alfalfa, slips made of boards were pulled out to the fields behind the horses. The slips would be



Left: Mary McFarland Wohl, Bertha Reeder Hunt, Clara Ransom Davis in 1941. (Latah County Historical Society)



Right: Clara Pearl Ransom in 1947 with the University of Idaho ROTC rifle team. She was an honored guest at their awards ceremony due to her status as an alumna of the 1897 Idaho women's rifle team. (Collection of the author – likely from the local newspaper collection originally)

loaded like a regular haystack and then hauled to a baling site. At the baler, boards would be put across the front and side of the slips and the horses led forward. The front and side boards would pull the stack off the slips so the unloading didn't have to be done by hand. Still, it was exhausting work.

Sterling and Clara Davis had two daughters. June was born in 1907; Clare in 1914. The gap was probably partly due to the responsibility of caring for the Hocketts. They lived on the farm outside of Moscow until Clare was old enough to attend school. June had been home-schooled up to then. So about 1919, Clara and her daughters moved to a home in town during the school year, while Sterling remained on the farm. Summers were spent on the farm together.⁹ As the farmhouse has been added to and remodeled over the years, some interesting artifacts have come to light. Clara was active in the temperance movement and adamantly opposed to vices such as drinking, tobacco use, and foul language. Sterling liked tobacco, so he got in the habit of hiding his old tins in the walls so Clara wouldn't find them in the trash pile.¹⁰ During a more recent renovation, a collection of old, worn-out shoes was pulled from the walls.

Redstem ceanothus (*Ceanothus sanguineus*): *This shrub is an important winter browse, and year round shelter for many wildlife species, including deer and elk. Also provides cover for bees, birds, and many small mammals.*

Back in town, Clara began taking in tenants at her home on Jefferson Street, usually students from the university. She also saved money and acquired several other rental houses, eventually owning nearly an entire city block. Every young person who passed through her door was a potential pupil to

her. When a student was having trouble with any subject, Clara would clear off the kitchen table and begin tutoring the struggling scholar. Two of these tenant-scholars eventually married her daughters: Paul Wickward married June and Laurence Smith wedded Clare.

Clara was a stickler for proper grammar and her grandkids recall being corrected whenever they misspoke. Because of her love for botany, she was always pointing out and naming the wildflowers, in hopes of instilling a love of nature in the children. Though Clara was not a particularly affectionate grandmother, she earned the respect of her grandchildren.

When Clara began researching her family history, her interest was at least partly driven by a desire to join the DAR. This goal was one of many that eluded her.¹¹ Her interest in history also led to her work with the Latah County Pioneer Association, now the Latah County Historical Society. Her scrapbooks of photographs, postcards, clippings, and other materials related to people and events in Latah County reside in the Special Collections Library at the University of Idaho. Other civic involvements kept Clara busy during the winter. She belonged to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the 4-H Club. She led a group of Girl Reserves and helped with Extension work.

Clara was a Methodist like her father. She was active in the M. E. church and, prior to her marriage, in the Epworth League, a young adult group affiliated with the church. One story about Clara and the church involves the pipe organ. When the church needed a new organ in the 1920s, Clara offered to fund the purchase. But there was a condition: they had to hire her daughter, Clare Davis, to play it.¹²

As with her in-town real estate, Clara's homestead proved a worthy investment. The sale of timber from the land helped



Above: Members of the Epworth League in 1898. Clara is seated on the right. (University of Idaho)

Right: Clara Davis (Smith [1914 – 2004]) seated at the pipe organ in the Methodist Church, Moscow. Courtesy of Barbara Smith.

put her daughters through the university, passing on her legacy of generations of educated women. In 1940, she deeded 80 acres of the original homestead to each of her daughters. The other 80 acres she deeded to her niece, Clara. The land was eventually sold in 1945.

Sometimes Clara took frugality a bit to the extreme. When June and Paul were living in southern California in the late 1920s, Clara took Clare to visit them. To get home to Moscow, they bought a bus or train ticket and June waved them off. What June didn't realize was that the tickets only got Clara and Clare to the next town. From there, the women hitchhiked back to Idaho. Clare, as teenaged daughters are wont to do, was mortified at her mother's penury and embarrassed to be asking strangers for free transportation across the country.¹³

Western yarrow (*Achillea millifolium*): *The scientific name is a reference to the mythological Achilles, as in "Achilles' heel."*

Even though Clara gave up her teaching career, she had plenty of work at home to keep her busy. During the school year she cooked for and tutored her tenants. In the summer there was plenty of work on the farm. By the late 1920s working the farm became too much for Sterling, so he rented out the land and moved into town with Clara and Clare. (Later June and Paul Wickward took over the farm, turning it into a dairy operation.) In 1931 Sterling was diagnosed with intestinal cancer and he died in January 1933. Clara nursed him throughout his illness.

One of Clara's challenges was being stricken by myasthenia gravis, an autoimmune disorder, later in life. The condition



is characterized by motor-muscle weakness caused by disrupted communication between nerves and muscle tissue. Sometimes facial muscles are affected and cause drooping eyelids and mouth, similar to the appearance of a stroke victim. Speech can become slurred and swallowing difficulties sometimes occur. For Clara the fatigue caused by her condition limited her excursions from her home and she usually dressed in a long robe rather than street clothes.

Clare Smith summed up her mother by saying, “Clara Ransom Davis was an intelligent, well-educated woman who really lived ahead of her time and was constantly frustrated that she was unable to live up to her potential. Housekeeping was her lot, but it was not to her liking. She believed in education for her children and saw that they received it. She loved her six grandchildren, but didn’t want to be a ‘grandmother’. She felt that the term relegated her to the ‘has-beens’.” Clara Ransom Davis lived to the age of 76, passing away in January 1953 in her beloved hometown of Moscow.

List of Sources

1. Catalog of the University of Idaho 1898 – 1899. 1898. North Idaho Star, Moscow, Idaho, pp 10, 24-26. Many of the early school catalogs can be found online at Google Books. They are a wonderful source of early history of Moscow, Idaho.
2. Botanical glossary definitions are all quoted from *Biology of Plants*, Sixth Ed. by Peter H. Raven, Ray F. Evert, and Susan E. Eichhorn. 1999. W. H. Freeman and Company, New York, New York.
3. Moscow Public Schools 1891 report card for Clara Ransom in the collection of the Latah County Historical Society.
4. Davis, Mrs. S. P. “Early Schools of Latah County.” Undated newspaper clipping from the collection of the Latah County Historical Society.
5. Dates and information on the Russell School are noted on Clara Ransom Davis’ watercolor of the schools. These watercolors are part of the collection of the Latah County Historical Society.
6. Davis, Clara Ransom. “Homesteading in Idaho.” Three-page essay, date unknown. Probably written in the early 1920s.
7. Murray, E. H. 1902. Letter of recommendation for Miss Clara Ransom. Collection of the Latah County Historical Society.
8. News clipping dated September 9, 1954, no source given. Clipping in the collection of the Latah County Historical Society.
9. Much of the information about the courtship and married life of Sterling and Clara was taken from stories written by their daughter, Clare Davis Smith.
10. Story from a conversation with David Wickward, son of June Davis Wickward.
11. Story from a conversation with Jean Wickward Riederer, daughter of June Davis Wickward.
12. Story from a conversation with Barbara Smith, daughter of Clara Davis Smith. Contacts at the Methodist Church in Moscow were unable to verify the source of funding for the organ.
13. Story from a conversation with David Wickward.

About the Author

Eilene Lyon is an environmental biologist living in Durango, Colorado. She has had an interest in American history for most of her life, despite her high school history teachers (who shall not be named). Eilene inherited an interest in genealogy from her grandmothers who passed along family trees and other documents pertaining to family history. One of those treasures is a set of letters from Clara Ransom’s grandparents, written when her grandfather went to California during the Gold Rush. She also seems to have inherited Clara’s love for botany. Eilene is married with two dogs, no children.

</> Digital Initiatives
University of Idaho Library

Latah County Oral History Collection
Remembering Latah County and Idaho Life at the turn of the 20th century

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Select an Individual

Latah County was an exhilarating place to live at the beginning of the twentieth century. Residents of the county contended with wild animals, mob actions, economic upheaval, revenge murders, union struggles, mining and logging accidents, and various other challenges in settling and inhabiting an area that had already long been inhabited by many Native Americans who called the place home.

We present here digitized audio recordings together with their indexes and transcripts for over 300 detailed recollections of life during that time. These oral histories were first conducted and collected in the mid-1970s by the Latah County Historical Society, primarily by one man, Sam Schrage. For more on the collection, check out Schrage's new introduction to the material, as well as the original forward and guide.

You can search the interviews below by keyword or location, or use the tabs above to find interviews by location, map, name, or subject.

Search Interviews by keyword or location:
Search ... Reset Search 337 of 337 interviews Sort by: name random

Suggested subjects: accidents, African Americans, automobiles, businesses, childhood, children, chores, churches, clothing, dances, dating, death, drinking, education, families, farming, fires, food

Suggested locations: American Ridge, Big Bear Ridge, Bovill, Burnt Ridge, Central Ridge, Clarkia, Colfax, Deary, Dry Ridge, Elk River, Genesee, Harvard, Hatter Creek, Helmer, Juliaetta, Kendrick, Lewiston, McGary Butte

All Lola Gamble Clyde interviews

Emma Christenson Shirrod
Interview #1, 1/21/1975
Topics: Family pioneering and childhood experiences. Family illnesses and deaths. Early Genesee. Her courtship. 1:21:75 2 hr
Subjects: Great Depression. Native Americans. Prohibition accidents. automobiles. childhood. colleges and universities. dating. death. families. farming. fires. holidays. homesteads. illness. politics. stores. winter. women. wool
Locations: Janoville. Genesee. Walla Walla. Washington. Lewiston

Mi & Marie Lee Lew
Interview #3, 1/20/1976
Topics: Separation of families. Her immigration to America. Chinese community building in Walla Walla. Social controls within community. Life of truck gardeners. 1:20:76 19 hr 54p
Subjects: Chinese Americans. Christmas. outdoors. elderly families. farming. finances. gardens. immigrants. marriage. religion. schools. stores. women. world wars
Locations: Moscow. Walla Walla. Portland. Seattle

All Dora Otter Fleener interviews

E. J. (Tom) Platt
Interview #1, 12/3/1974
Topics: With William Hickman (cousin). Kenneth Platt (brother). Introduction of purebred Herefords by Platt

Mary Grey Edwards
Interview #1, 11/3/1976
Topics: Family and neighbors in childhood. An Indian-white family. Dances. Life on the farm and in Genesee

Clarence Johnson
Interview #1, 2/8/1974
Topics: 1893 depression. J.P. Vollmer. Early Troy. 2:8

Violet Frei Boag
Interview #1, 10/15/1976
Topics: Slabtown and Collins. 1914 fire. Advantages of

For Your Listening Pleasure: Latah County Oral History Digital Collection

By Darcie Riedner and Erin Stoddart,
University of Idaho Library Special Collections and Archives

Latah County history is now available for your listening pleasure through the University of Idaho Library Latah County Oral History Digital Collection. This collection, which can be found at <http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/lcoh/>, consists of almost 600 hours of interviews with nearly 200 residents of Latah County and the surrounding area recalling life at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Most of the interviews cover a fifty-year period between 1890 and 1940.

This collection is an online representation of the Latah County Oral History Collection originally recorded on audio cassette tapes in celebration of America's Bicentennial in 1976. In his original introduction from 1977, principal interviewer Sam Schrage described the interviews as "their narratives enfold personal, family and community experiences in an unbroken continuity that extends from the frontier

Select an individual

lone ADAIR (b. 1883)

Residence: Moscow, Bovill, Forty-nine Meadows. **Occupation(s):** County assessor, teacher, postal clerk, timber homesteader
Family Origin: Parents came from Oregon and Indiana (1893); family lived in the McConnell mansion (1900-36)

Interviews

Interview #1, 6/8/1976
Topics: With Bernadine Conelason (sister). Family's Bovill homesteading. Cooking for firefighters (1900). Governor McConnell's family. Purchase of mansion. Family's pet bear. Backwoods home. 6:9:76 2 hr 33p
Duration: 1:58:53 **Interviewer:** Sam Schrage
Keywords: bears. families. farms. fires. forest fires. holidays. homesteads. horses. livestock. winter. women
Locations: Moscow. Bovill. Forty-nine Meadows

Interview #2, 9/3/1976
Topics: With Bernadine Conelason. Timber homesteading at Forty-nine Meadows. loss of claim. Relationship with parents. Victorian manners and dress. Methodist church and revival. Prohibition. Family cars. 9:3:76 2 hr 51p
Duration: 2:02:58 **Interviewer:** Sam Schrage
Keywords: Paschaana. automobiles. churches. clothing. families. fishing. holidays. homesteads. hunting. illness. mansions. music. religion. timber. winter. women
Locations: Moscow. Bovill. Forty-nine Meadows

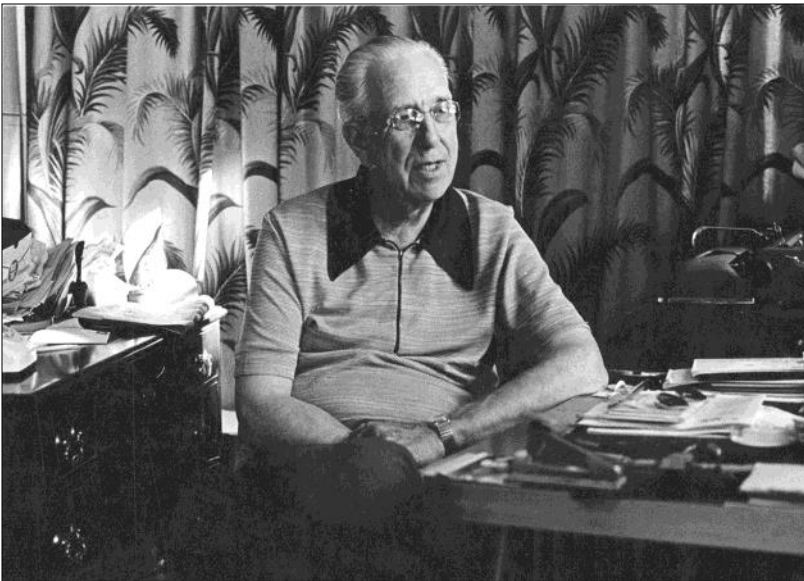
Interview #3, 11/16/1976
Topics: With Bernadine Conelason. Family life in the McConnell mansion. Father's medical practice. friendship with Nell Pearce. Mother's poor health and optimism. Family move to

(click to see large image)

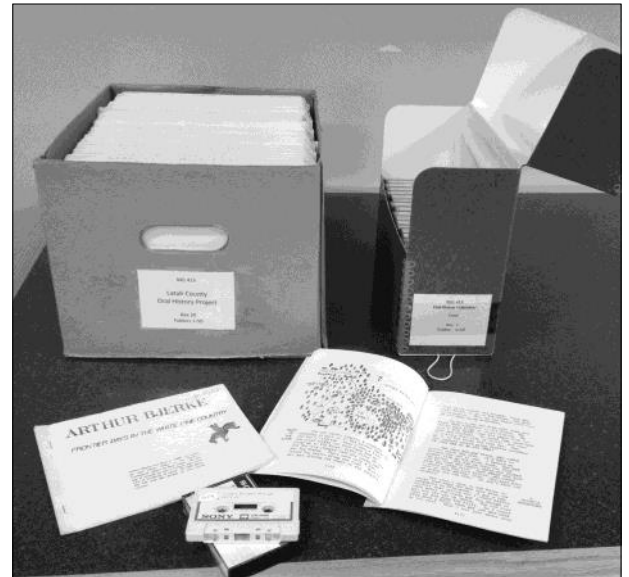
Related Locations (click to visit map)

(Screenshots courtesy of authors.)

conditions of their childhoods to the recent transformations of their neighborhoods and towns. Their sense of history is sharpened by the newness of the country, for many of their parents were homesteaders, and they know that they had a unique opportunity to witness the formative period of early settlement and change." When revisiting the collection in a new forward written in 2015, Schrage added "four decades on, I appreciate the wisdom of these men and women more than ever. What strikes me most is their knack for balancing independence and community. They are strong individuals, with a firm grasp of their own aspirations, choices, setbacks and successes. They also have regard for the well-being of others—a concern not just for their family and neighbors, but for the prospering of the community at large, that extends, often, to the region and America as a whole. Tricky as it may look to us to square the interests of self and others, this first post-frontier generation prized both."



Frank Brocke, president of First Bank of Troy. (LCHS Brocke.F.02.)



Oral History records. (Courtesy of authors.)

Subjects interviewed lived throughout Latah County and the neighboring area including Moscow, Clarkia, Colfax, Lewiston, Kendrick, Palouse, Potlatch, Juliaetta, Deary, Troy, Bovill, Viola, and Genesee. Some participants were born in Latah County or the surrounding region, while others moved with immigrant parents and family from different parts of the United States or emigrated themselves from places as far away as Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Greece. They worked as state legislators, county commissioners, police officers, farmers, loggers, geologists, authors, teachers, newspaper editors, homemakers, nurses, bankers, miners, businessmen, and railroad engineers, among other occupations.

The topics discussed during the interviews were diverse and far-ranging but still hold true today. Topics included colleges and universities, family, farm life, religion, teaching and rural schools, the Great Depression, politics, crime, disease outbreaks and epidemics, logging life, racial discrimination, social life in isolated communities, labor unions, immigration, homesteading, prohibition, medicine, and world wars.

One story in the collection is that of 83-year-old Frances Vaughan Fry (http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/lcoh/people/FRY_Frances.html). She talked about her life at Cedar Creek and in neighboring Kendrick. Frances recalled life on her family's farm 12 miles outside of Kendrick where they settled in the late 1890's when she was three or four years old. She not only grew up at Cedar Creek but also spent some of her married life there raising her own family before moving to Kendrick. In her interview Frances remembers her mother and older brother tending the family farm with the help of a neighbor while her father was away, working as a railroad depot agent in communities throughout northern Idaho. As she grew older Frances did much of the farm work and continued going to school while her brothers went away to work. After her own marriage at the age of 18, Frances worked on her own farm alongside her husband until her sons turned 12 years of age. Her daughters helped inside the

home with cooking and cleaning while their mother managed cattle and shocked grain. Raising a family of ten children, Frances said she would use a 50-pound sack of flour a week and canned her own foods by the gallons. Frances also talks about her work outside the home as a cook for logging crews, a doctor's assistant, and a store clerk in shops around Kendrick.

Another interview in the collection is from Frank Brocke (http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/lcoh/people/BROCKE_Frank.html) who was president of the First Bank of Troy for many years. Part of his story is a vivid recollection of the flu epidemic of 1919 and the impact on his family who lived on a farm on American Ridge. Frank was thirteen years old when the flu struck down his entire family, eventually claiming his father as one of its victims. Brocke said the rural school, usually open eight months of the year, was only in session three months that year due to the epidemic. After his father's death the responsibility of the farm fell to Brocke and his fifteen-year-old brother and their mother. He said they brought in the harvest that year and were able to continue farming for two more years before leasing the farm to a family member and moving to Kendrick in 1922.

These two interviews are only a small sample of the hundreds of memories and stories shared in the collection, another collaborative project between the Latah County Historical Society and the University of Idaho Library Digital Initiatives and Special Collections and Archives. Listeners curious about a particular topic can select from suggested subjects on the collection's index page as well as browse by individual and geographic location and listen to specific interviews online. Each interviewee has a web page that includes all of their interviews and related transcripts, which are also searchable online, and allows the researcher to jump to a specific part of the interview based on the transcript index. Please visit the Latah County Oral History Digital Collection at: <http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/lcoh>.

THE NEZ PERCE TRAILS AND OUR FIRST SETTLEMENTS

By Earl Bennett

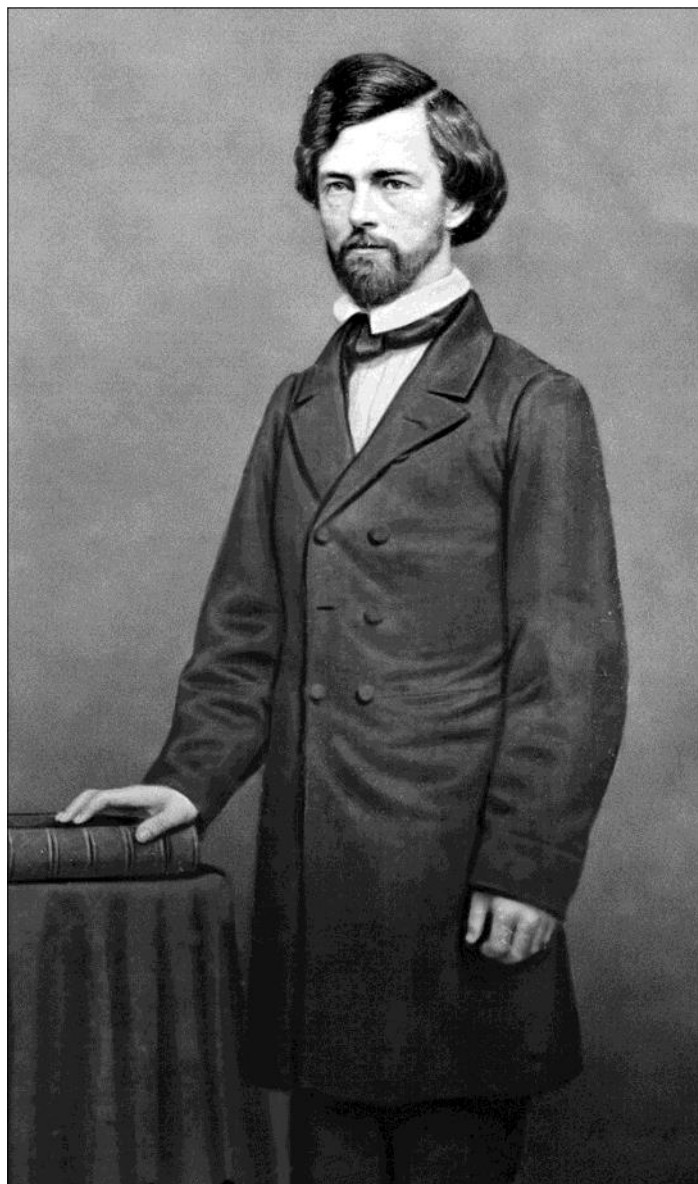


Figure 1. Isaac Ingalls Stevens was appointed as the first Governor of Washington Territory by President Franklin Pierce and confirmed by Congress in 1853. Stevens was charged with three tasks by the president: govern this immense unknown area, sign treaties with all the tribes in the territory, and find a railroad route across the Rockies. He would accomplish all three. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Stevens)

The “lay of the land” or topography is a major factor in how humans have moved around our planet ever since we first evolved. Ancestors of the Nez Perce may have arrived in our area as early as 13,000 years ago and they have existed as a unit for at least 2,500 years. This was more than enough time for tribal members to become intimately familiar with their surroundings and develop the easiest route from point A to B. The use of horses by the Nez Perce starting in the early 1700s continued the trend except that the passage of thousands of horses and people would change what earlier were crude trails to well-traveled roads. In fact, Lewis and Clark referred to “Indian roads” in their journals documenting their famous “Voyage of Discovery” in 1805 and 1806. The location of these ancient roads, still in places the trace of our modern roads, is an ongoing subject of interest to historians.

Just as Lewis and Clark were charged by President Jefferson with finding an inland passage across the Rocky Mountains, Isaac Ingalls Stevens, first governor of Washington Territory (Figure 1), was asked by President Franklin Pierce to find a railroad route across the mountains. Complying with his

instructions, Stevens would lead an expedition of about 20 explorers into the largely uncharted ground of his new territory. Stevens wrote in his journal on June 21, 1855:

“But to resume: in 3 1/4 miles we reached the extensive kamas grounds of the Nez Perces. Here were 600 Nez Perces men, women and children—with at least 2,000 horses—gathering the kamas. So abundant is this valuable and nutritious root, that it requires simply four days’ labor for them to gather sufficient for their year’s use.”

Although brief, this is our first written description of the area we call Moscow. Stevens is believed to have been looking down from Paradise Ridge at an area near the present Iron Wok restaurant on the south end of town.

The trail Stevens was using is today known as the Stevens Trail (Figure 2). He had been following Native American trails from Walla Walla along the same route that Lewis and Clark had used on their return trip east from the Pacific coast in 1806. Highway 12 follows this same route in many places. This trail came down Alpowa Creek to the Snake River. Lewis and Clark and Stevens were advised by Red Wolf, chief of the local Nez Perce band living above the mouth of

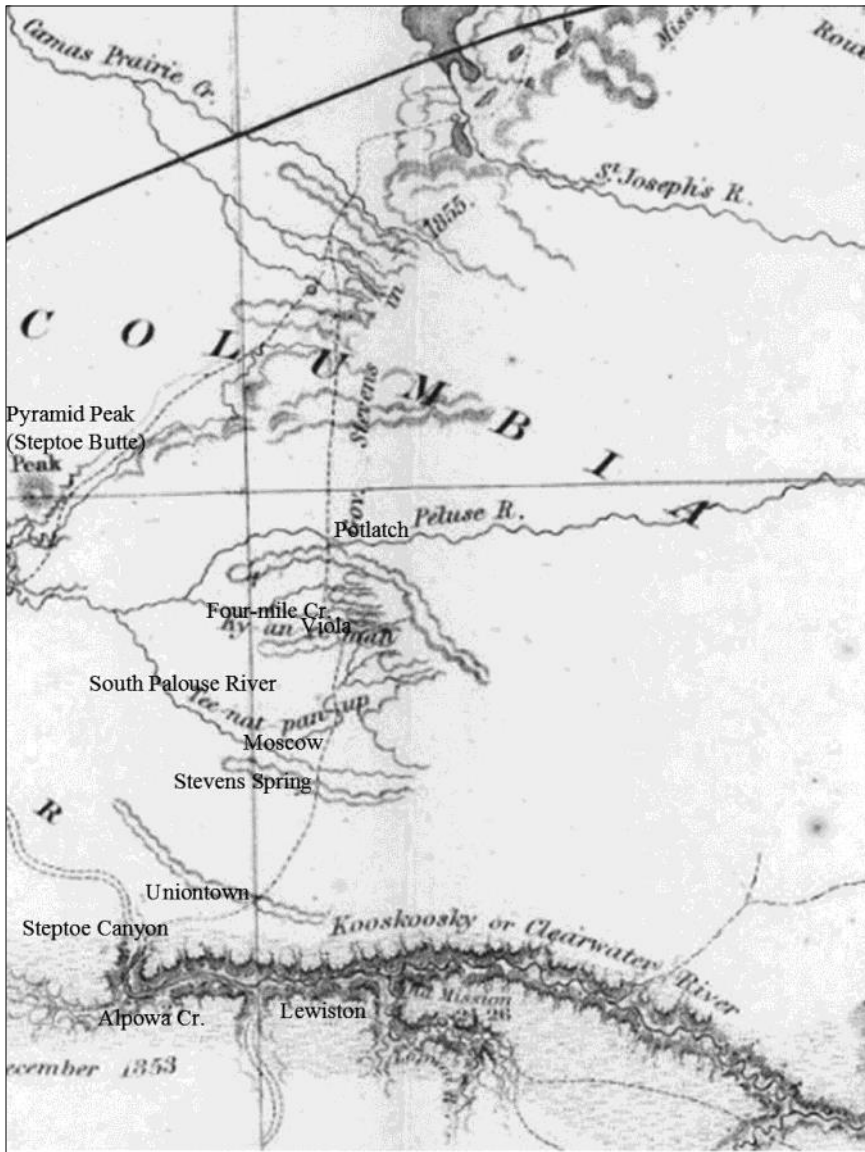


Figure 2. Map of Isaac Stevens survey route in 1855. His route included today's Moscow, ID. Location names added by the author. Tee-nat-paw-up = South Palouse River. Ky-an-ee-man = Fourmile Creek. (Stevens, 1855)

Alpowia Creek, and others to ford the Snake just east of the current island (formed by the modern dams on the river) that is home to Chief Timothy Park. After crossing, Stevens turned west following another trail that went up Steptoe Canyon. The explorers probably split off on yet another trail up Stuart Canyon, a tributary of Steptoe Canyon, to end up just south of Uniontown.

From the Uniontown area, Stevens describes his continuing passage up Thorn Creek and his camp at Stevens Spring (also called Chris Deesten Spring) on June 20. Stevens Spring is the grove of trees up the draw just south and east of Jacksha Road (Hwy 95, MM 340). Stevens foretold the future of the Palouse repeating an earlier equally enthusiastic observation:

"I will again say, we have been astonished to-day at the luxuriance 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 table-land, and the soil like that of the prairies of Illinois."

Moving north and east from Stevens Spring, Stevens would mention the junction of his trail with an even larger one known as the Greater Nez Perce Trail (GNT).

"In 2 1/4 miles further on we struck the great Nez Perces trail, coming from Lapwai, a much larger and more used trail than the one we had followed from Red Wolf's ground."

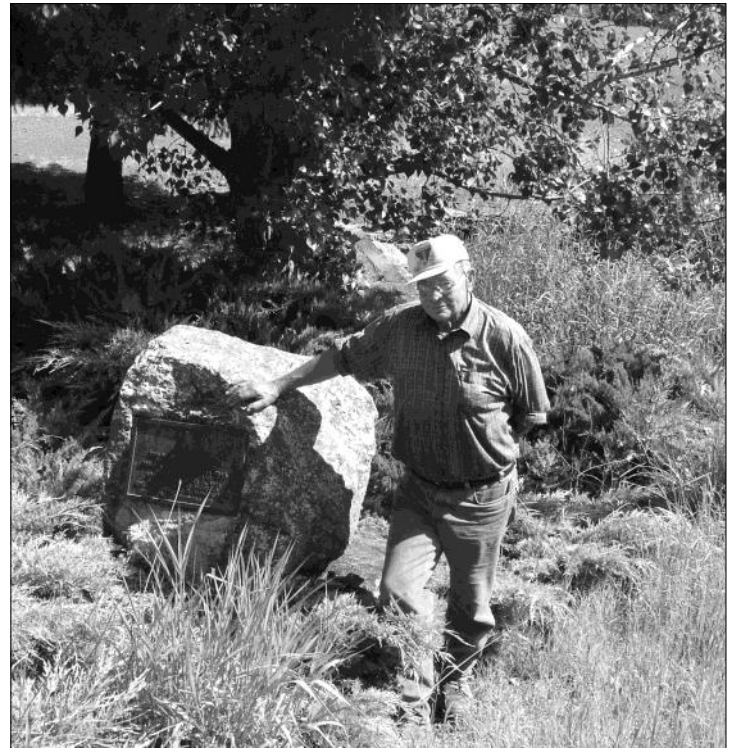
The party would continue northward on the GNT, close to present-day Mountain View Road, describing Missionary Spring (also called Cataldo Spring) and crossing Moscow Mountain near where Highway 95 goes over the ridge. The party then traversed Fourmile Creek, crossed Crooks Hill and camped on the Palouse River near present day Potlatch. Stevens notes that between Moscow Mountain and Crooks Hill a trail went off into Spokane Falls country. This would be the approximate present-day route of SR66 just north of Viola.

The trace of Stevens trail and the intersection with the GNT on Paradise Ridge were documented during a field trip in 1937 led by Professor Cornelius J. Brosnan, head of the History Department, University of Idaho. Professor Brosnan noted:

"We were pleased to learn, early in our study, that the Nez Perces Trail can be traced in detail and with accuracy over the ten mile sector selected for our special study. This is possible for three reasons: First, the trail

Figure 3. (Below) A band of sheep being driven down Blaine's "Main Street" that is the present day Blaine Road. This is believed to be part of the Greater Nez Perce Trail and the width of the trail is impressive. (Courtesy of Shirley Carrico, Blaine, ID)

Figure 4. (Right) Bob Clyde standing by the monument erected by the Worthwhile Club in 1938, marking the intersection of the Stevens and Greater Nez Perce trails at the intersection of Lenville and Mill roads. (Photo by Earl H. Bennett)



has changed the character of the vegetation which grows upon it, thus producing a distinct color streak which can be easily traced; second, the accurate reports concerning its course written by Governor Stevens, his secretary, James Doty, by the letters of Father Cataldo, and other travelers who journeyed over it; and third, by the reports of the few living pioneer settlers, who still distinctly remember just where the trail ran, particularly the portions of it which ran past their own homes.

According to our findings, which we believe are accurate, the Nez Perces Trail skirted the base of Paradise Hills and reached the camas grounds at a point just a short distance east of the Soil Conservation Service Camp [site close to the Iron Wok restaurant today], just south of Moscow. It touched the camas grounds at a point on the B. T. Byrns farm.

The trail then followed northwestwardly the Ti-net-pan-up stream or the South Branch of the Palouse River until it intersected the "Great Nez Perces Trail from Lapwai" in a field one quarter mile north of the Tomer School house, Oscar Nelson place.

The trail which the Stevens party followed up to this point was a branch trail of the Nez Perces coming from "Red Wolf's Camp" or the modern Lewiston. This trail passed near the site of Uniontown and swerved to the northeastwardly until it reached the Stevens Spring. This Indian path was a "summer trail" passing over a clay soil and not used much during the rainy seasons or winter months. An appropriate brief name for it, to distinguish it from the main Nez Perces trail, would be "The Steven's Trail."

"The Great Nez Perces Trail coming from Lapwai" left the field near the Tomer School and passed northward and intersected the Troy highway a half mile west of the old Tomer place at the foot of Tomer's Butte. The place where it crossed the highway is at present the farm home of Peter Molson and deserves a marker.

The main trail, wide and deeply worn, now passed about a half mile east of the Moscow cemetery and crossed over the hills a few rods east of the

Tom Hall clay pit, just east of the Moscow cemetery. It next crossed the fields just east of the old Ray Woodworth place and continued on a few yards east of the John Moerder residence, near the East end of Sixth Street. Here, after 1872, for a few years, the trail ran past Moscow's first "post-office", or rather postal "station" where Moscow's earliest pioneers received their mail and paid twenty-five cents for mailing a letter. This old postal station or "dry-goods box of a post-office," as the pioneer settlers called it, was a veritable landmark until a few years ago. [The log building, built in 1872, was located on the southeast corner of the Hillcrest and Mountain View intersection.]

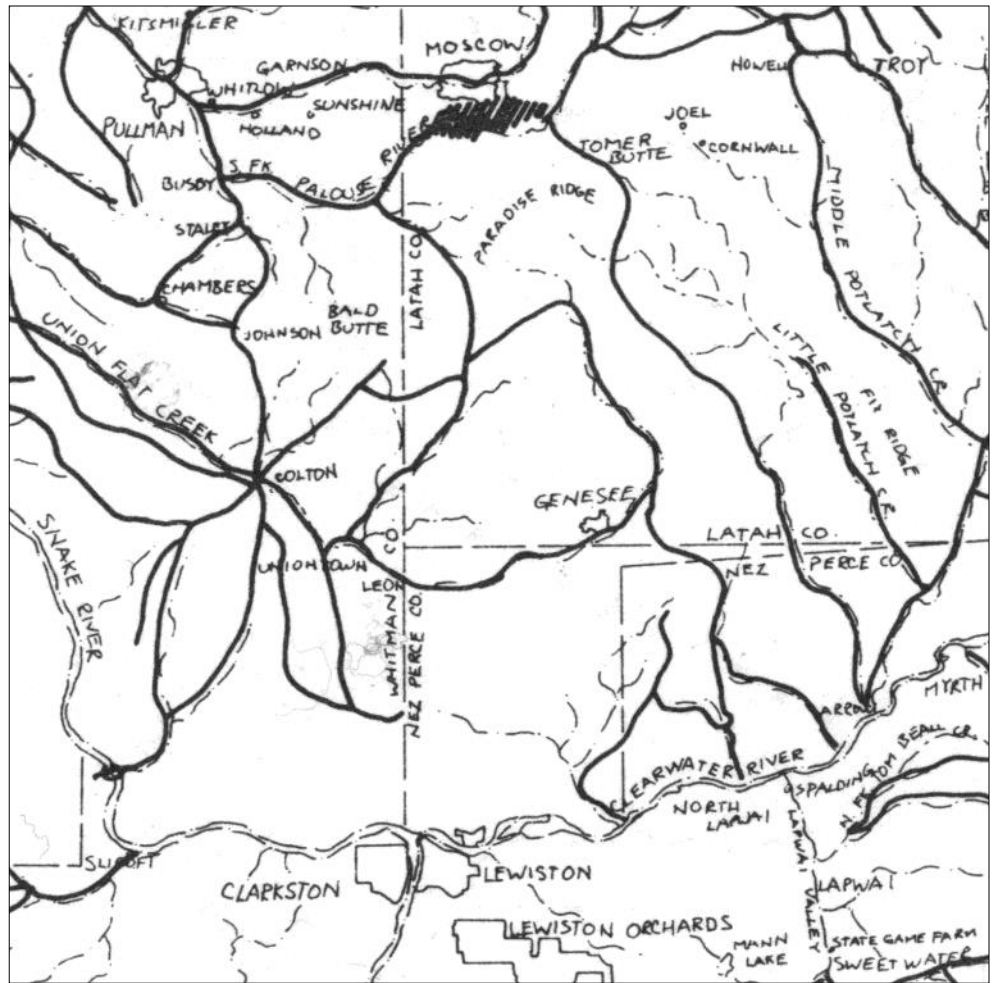
This committee hopes that in the near future, this little post-office will be restored or a suitable marker placed there. This little marker should recall for the boys and girls of Moscow, now in their schoolrooms studying history, the Moscow of the postal express riders, riding back and forth over the Great Nez Perces Trail from Lapwai northwards through Tat-kin-mah (the place of the Spotted Young Deer, the present Moscow) onward near Father Cataldo's Spring on the John Michelbook farm past the Kee-an-ee-nah ridge (Viola Ridge) on by Ewings Ford to Spokane Falls.

After passing the post-office site on the John Moerder place, the trail swept northward, almost arrowlike, towards Father Cataldo's Spring and on through Viola Ridge, where our special study of the trail ends for this summer.

In its course after leaving the John Moerder place it passed north over the hills (for the Indians did not usually go around these hills, but right straight over them) about a half mile east of the Robbin's place in East Moscow. This ancient path can be easily traced in detail from the old post-office site to Viola Ridge."

The size of the GNT as described by Brosnan was impressive. The traffic on the "road" was at times heavy. Emma Shirrod described a line of Nez Perce with their horses over a mile long moving over the trail. They were moving north and she could see them from the Shirrod

Figure 5. A generalized map by Stephen Shawley showing his interpretation of the location of Nez Perce trails between Moscow and the Clearwater River. (Shawley, 1977)



homestead south of Genesee. (Shirrod, 1975). A picture of Blaine (Figure 3) shows a band of sheep moving down the GNT that went through the middle of town as Blaine Road does today.

The intersection of the Stevens and GNT trails would be marked by a boulder affixed with a brass plaque installed by the Worthwhile Club in 1938. It is still there today at the intersection of Lenville and Mill roads (Figure 4). Pictures of the monument, Professor Brosnan, the tour and a poem describing the installment of the monument are noted in Monroe, 2007.

While traces of the GNT and Stevens trails were plainly visible in the 1930s near Paradise Ridge, tracking the GNT south from the Worthwhile Club monument was very difficult even in the 1930s as farmers by then had plowed over the land many times and developers on Paradise Ridge built over the trail's trace. There are few obvious signs of the trails today.

In 1977 (revised in 1984) Stephen D. Shawley, working with Roderick Sprague, Head of the Anthropology Department at the University of Idaho, presented a report titled, "Nez Perce Trails." The study covered a 5-month investigation of the location of Nez Perce Trails, including trails north of the Clearwater River (Figure 5). The trails in Latah County as interpreted by Shawley were presented on the Pullman, WA,

1:250,000 scale topographic map along with other regional trails. Shawley notes that:

"estimations of the percentages of trails located and mapped is about 10% of those used in late aboriginal and early historic times within the 1855 reservation boundary; however, they include many of the major and important ones."

Shawley continues:

"Although certain trails were better known than others, all were clearly defined in the ground. Trails generally parallel water sources. Tribes in the Plateau regarded these trails as open highways, although tribes acted as hosts to other tribes who passed through their territory. The advent of the horse saw trails extended into more inaccessible areas. The horse inspired an expansion of trails and a more complex networks of trails."

Lt. John Mullan would eventually build the 625-mile-long Mullan military road in 1859-1860 from Fort Benton at the west end of river navigation on the Missouri near Great Falls to Fort Walla Walla in Washington Territory, the end of eastward navigation up the Columbia from the Pacific Coast. Some of the route had been traveled during the Stevens expedition, in which Mullan participated. Although little used by the military, many pioneers would use the road to travel to what is now northern Idaho.

The discovery of gold in 1860 near present-day Pierce by Wilbur Bassett, a prospector with E. D. Pierce's party, would

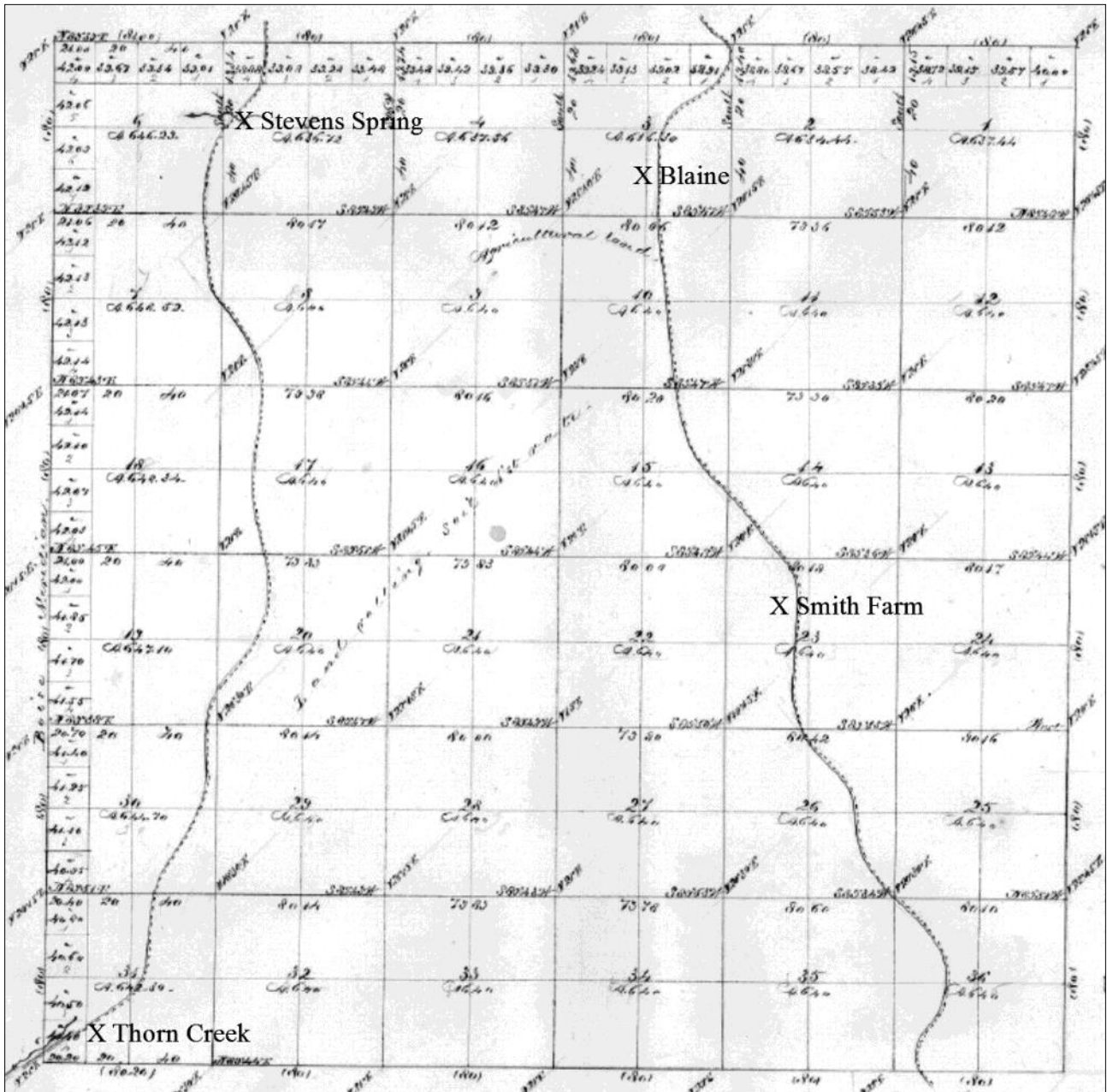


Figure 6. First survey map of T38N, R5W just north of Genesee surveyed by John B. David in 1870. The Stevens Trail (left) and Greater Nezperce Trail (right) were shown by dashed lines. Annotated by author. (Bureau of Land Management, GLO map, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>)

change the life of the Nez Perce forever. Although the site was well within the 1855 reservation boundary of the Nez Perce (established by Stevens as another of his charges from President Pierce), the gold rush was on. Thousands would make the pilgrimage to Lewiston and then on to the new gold strikes. These early settlers would make great use of the early native trails.

Prospectors searching for gold north from Lewiston crossed the Clearwater River and followed Nez Perce trails to the northern part of today's Latah County. Even with these trails, getting to the location of present-day Uniontown, Genesee or Moscow from Lewiston or anywhere else was not easy. Early Lewiston entrepreneurs were quick to capitalize on the gold rush. The first ferry crossing the Clearwater was built by William Craig in 1861 at Spaulding, and John Silcott and D. M. White built the Silcott Ferry to cross the

Clearwater River from Lewiston soon after starting another one to cross the Snake River near Alpowa Creek. (Allen, 1990).

An early way to claim federal land was under the Preemption Act of 1841. One could "squat" on 160 acres until it was surveyed and then buy the land for as little as \$1.25/acre. The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed one to earn up to 160 acres by living on a parcel for five years and then claiming it for a \$15 fee. The Timber Claims act of 1873 (also 160 acres) let early settlers get even more land by planting trees on 40 acres of the claim. Many of the pioneer farmers whose families still live near Genesee would do all three. In June of 1880, the Homestead Act was changed to allow one to purchase the land at \$1.25 an acre and live on it for 5 years rather than having to prove it up and wait five years for a patent. In the early 1900s, as pioneers pushed into increasingly arid areas of

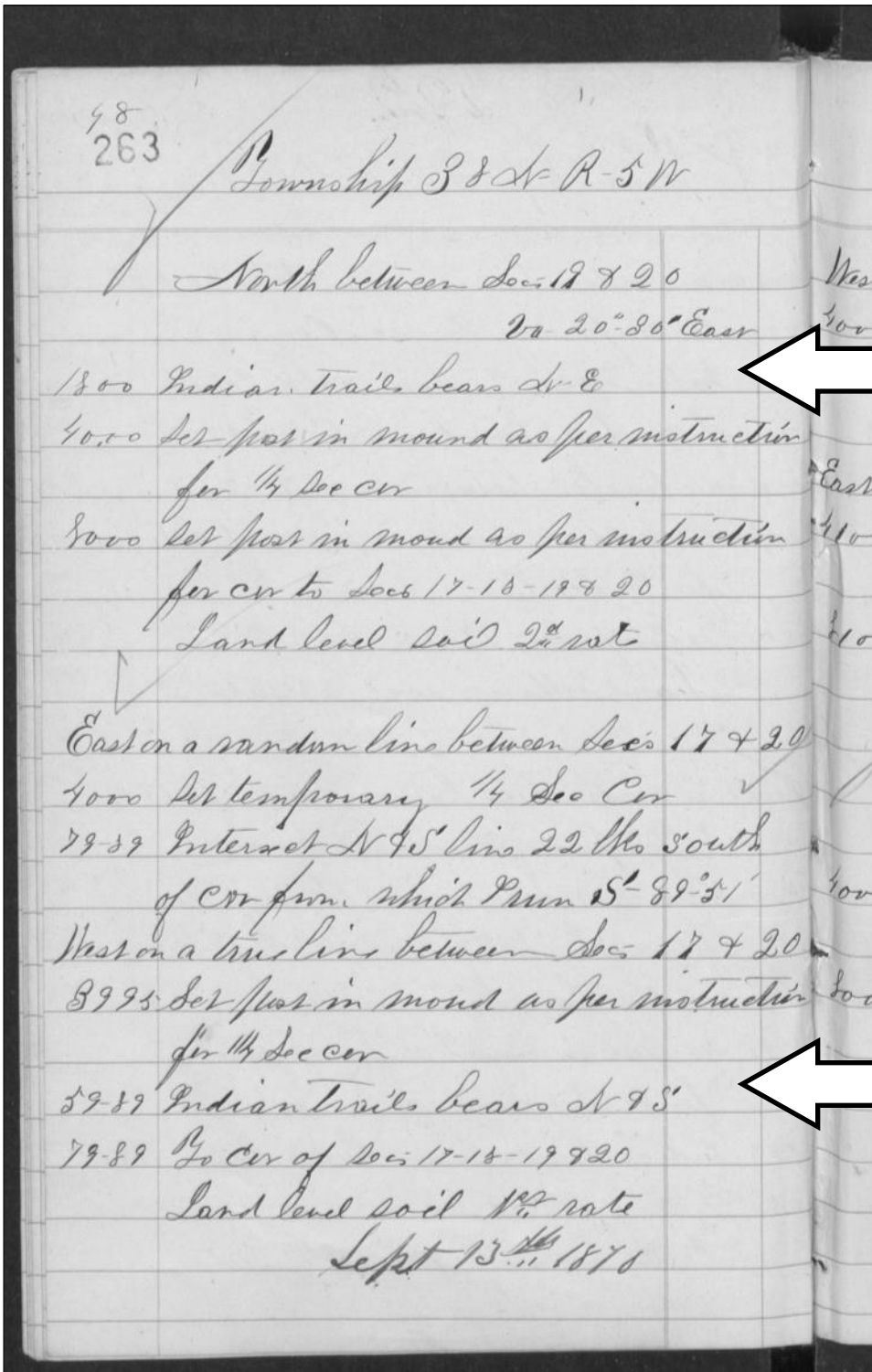


Figure 7. A page from John B. David's survey notebook of T38N, R5W noting Indian trails. (Bureau of Land Management, GLO map, <http://www.gloreCORDS.blm.gov/default.aspx>).

the United States, the amount of land given to settlers through the Homestead Act was increased from 160 acres to 640 acres. A key point to all of these acts was that the land had to be officially surveyed before claiming one's homestead or buying the land from the government.

An excellent source for researching the early trails in our area is the General Land Office (GLO) original survey maps and notes available online from the Bureau of Land Management. As noted, the surveys were important for attracting settlers under the Homestead Act. With the redrawing of the Nez Perce Reservation boundaries in a new treaty in 1863 (finally

ratified by Congress in 1867), almost all of what would become Latah County in 1888 was opened for homesteading as soon as the land could be surveyed.

The survey maps were laid out by Township, Range and Section referenced from the Boise Meridian (the main North-South line) and an Initial East-West Baseline. These two reference lines start at a point located 8 miles south of Kuna, ID. Townships were 6 miles long and numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. north of the Boise Meridian and Ranges were 6 miles long and laid out east and west along the Initial Baseline. Each Township/Range contained 36 1-square-mile sections.

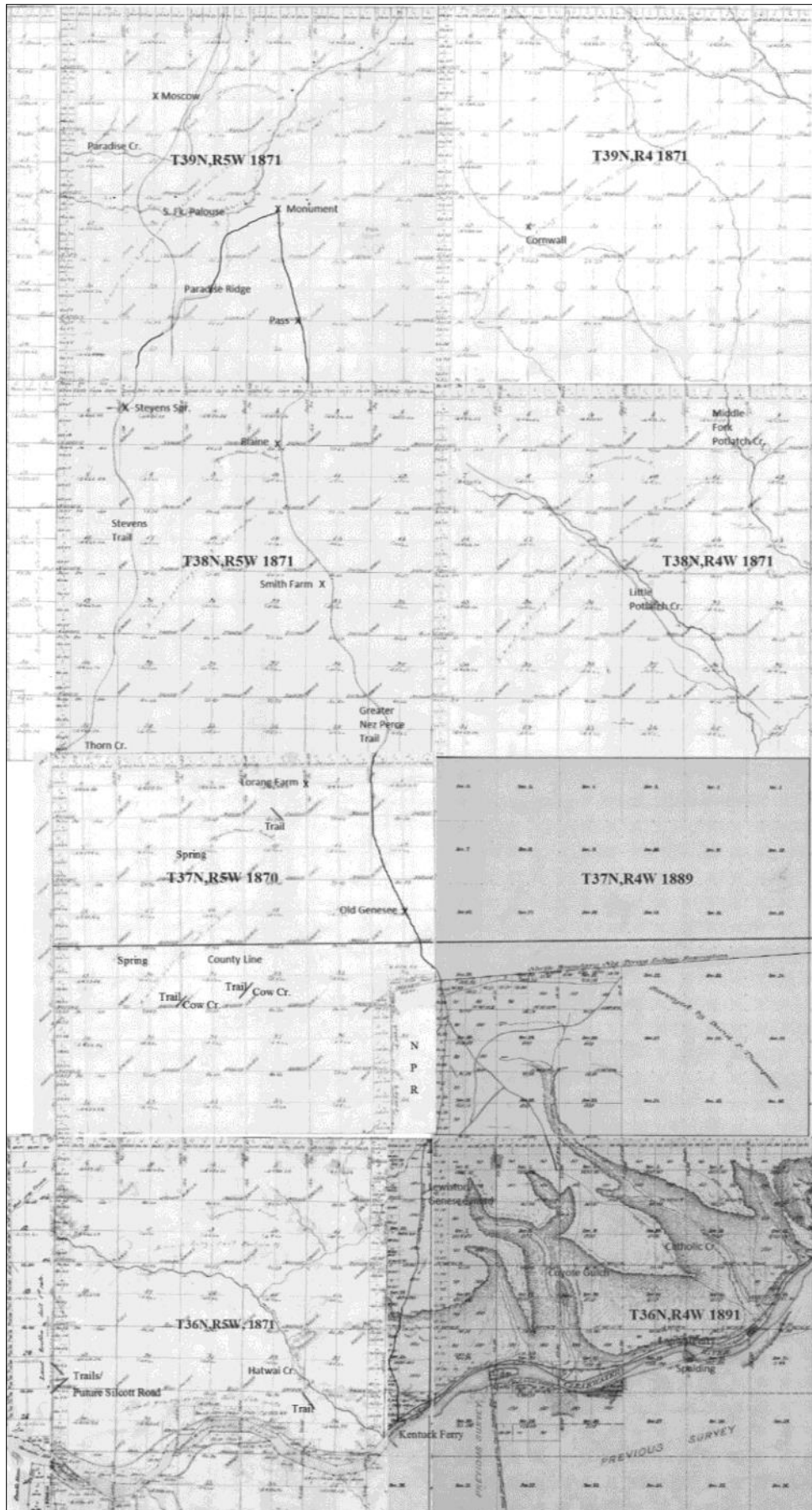


Figure 8. Composite of GLO survey maps for our area showing the trace of various Native American trails crossing parts of Nez Perce and Latah counties. (Bureau of Land Management, GLO maps: <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>. Compiled by Earl H. Bennett)

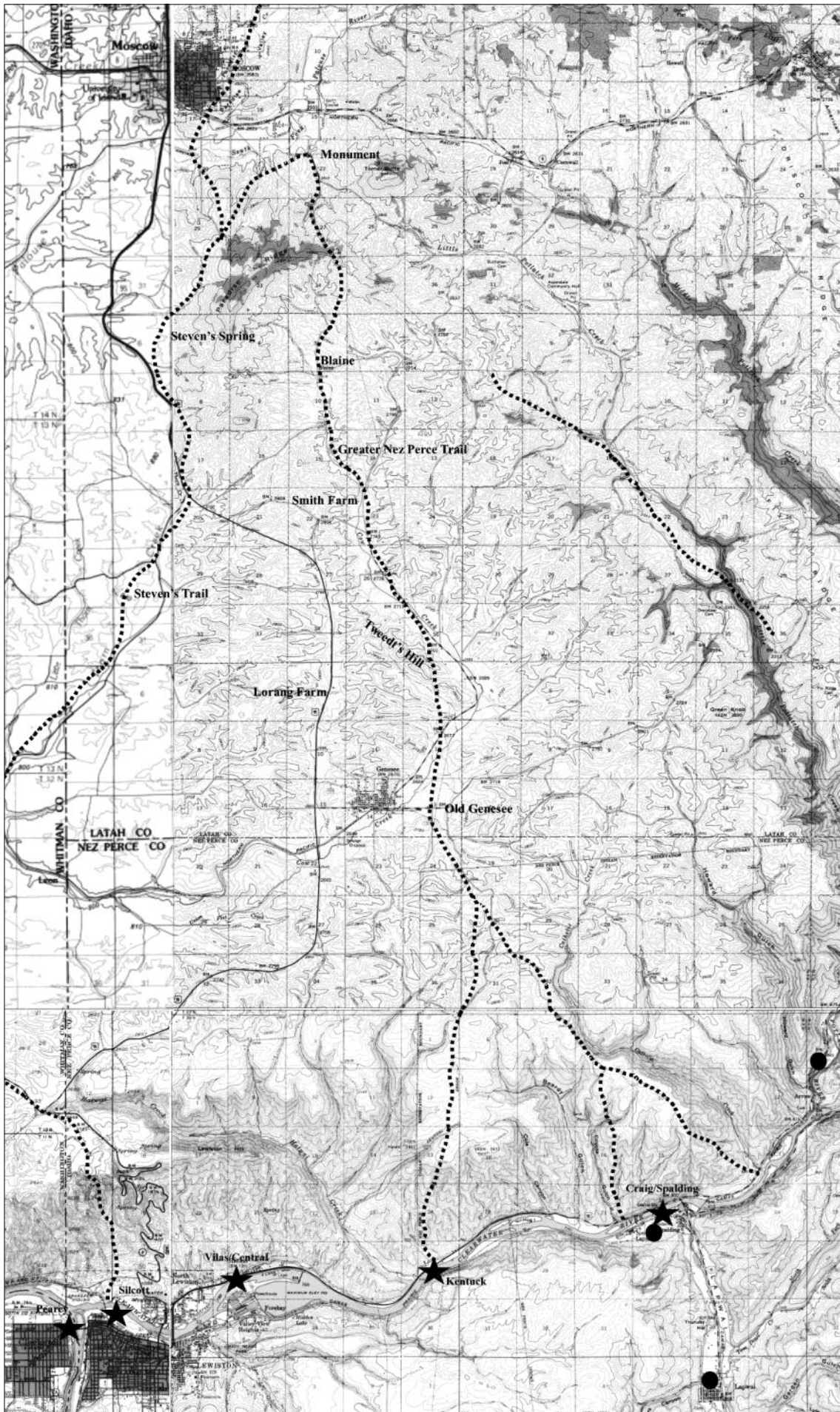


Figure 9. Trails from GLO maps (dotted lines) transposed onto a topographic base. Stars at bottom of map are ferry locations and river fords, circles are Nez Perce encampments. (Compiled by Earl H. Bennett)

A report to the Commissioner of the General Land Office in 1867 shows that no surveys had been done in our area. The first federal survey of T37N, R5W, Sec 13 (Old Town Genesee) and Sec 14 (New Town Genesee) was started in 1870 by John B. David and completed on January 25, 1871. David also surveyed T38N, R5W (Figure 6) just north of Genesee in 1870. Most of this part of (then) Nez Perce County had been surveyed by 1876 and the Townships had been subdivided into 36 sections.

Township 38N, R5W is a good example of how the original surveys were structured. This township is 228 miles north of the starting point of the Boise Meridian and 30 miles east of the Boise Meridian measured along the Initial East-West Baseline. It contains 36 sections numbered as shown in Figure 6; the same numbering system was used in all townships. Each section contained 640 acres. In addition each section was divided into quarter sections of 160 acres each and each quarter section was divided into another 4 sections containing 40 acres apiece. The original GLO survey maps only went down to a section.

I have added several geographic markers to Figure 6 for reference. Note that there are two sets of dashed lines crossing the map area. Figure 7 is a page from David's notebook, stating that at two points on one of the dashed lines was an Indian trail. Elsewhere in his notes, he mentions these trail crossings. The two sets of lines in Figure 6 are the Stevens Trail on the left and the GNT on the right. Figure 8 is a composite of these early survey maps showing trails crossing Latah County and Figure 9 shows these trails transposed to a modern topographic map. I have added annotations to both figures to aid location and orientation.

The importance of the Homestead Act and the first surveys is illustrated by the early census records. In the 1870 census (the first one containing Idaho Territory) there is no breakdown of the population in Nez Perce County (then including Latah County). Everyone was listed under five Enumeration Districts: three in the Lewiston area, one covering the Nez Perce Reservation (primarily the troops stationed at Fort Lapwai established in 1862), and one covering the Kootenai district. There was no listing for anyone in the area that would become Latah County. In the 1880 census, Moscow had its own listing and there were hundreds of people living in the area between Moscow and Lewiston (the Thorn Creek Enumeration District) including "Old Genesee."

Many of our pioneer settlers would congregate near the old Nez Perce trails. Brosnan noted that the post office at Paradise was on present-day Mountain View road on the east side of Moscow and close to the GNT. A Pony Express route delivered the mail from Lewiston to Paradise and eventually to Farmington, WA in 1875. The mail was delivered weekly when the trails were passable and less certain during the winter snows and spring mud. Similarly Old Genesee was on the GNT and Blaine, although established later (post office in 1882), was also on the trail.

Today's Highway 95 was nonexistent and it would take until the 1950s for it to become our main north-south thoroughfare.

Concern by settlers over the Nez Perce War of 1877 led to the building of several forts, including those at Moscow and near Old Town Genesee. The Genesee fort would become the site of Old Town and it would have a post office and stage stop. The few people that lived in the town were very familiar with the native Indians for, as noted, the town was right on or very close to the GNT.

As our early settlers had followed the Native American trails and built their first settlements near these roads, the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Uniontown and Genesee in 1888 marked the beginning of a new mode of transportation. More modern roads were built to conform to the railways. Likewise, the arrival of the automobile in the early 1900s again changed the way in which transportation would occur and would result in the highway system we enjoy today.

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