



# LATAH LEGACY



**History of the Camp Grizzly Area, 1859 to 1907**  
**The Latah County Historical Society: 50 Years of Progress**  
**The Elmore Church**  
**Held Together By Paint and Passion!**  
**A Retrospective of the University of Idaho's University Hut**

*Latah County  
Historical Society*



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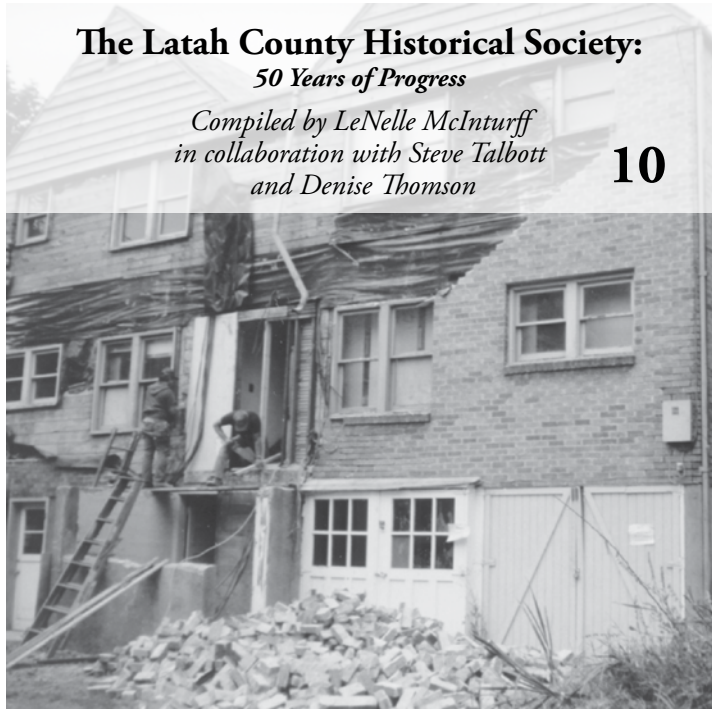
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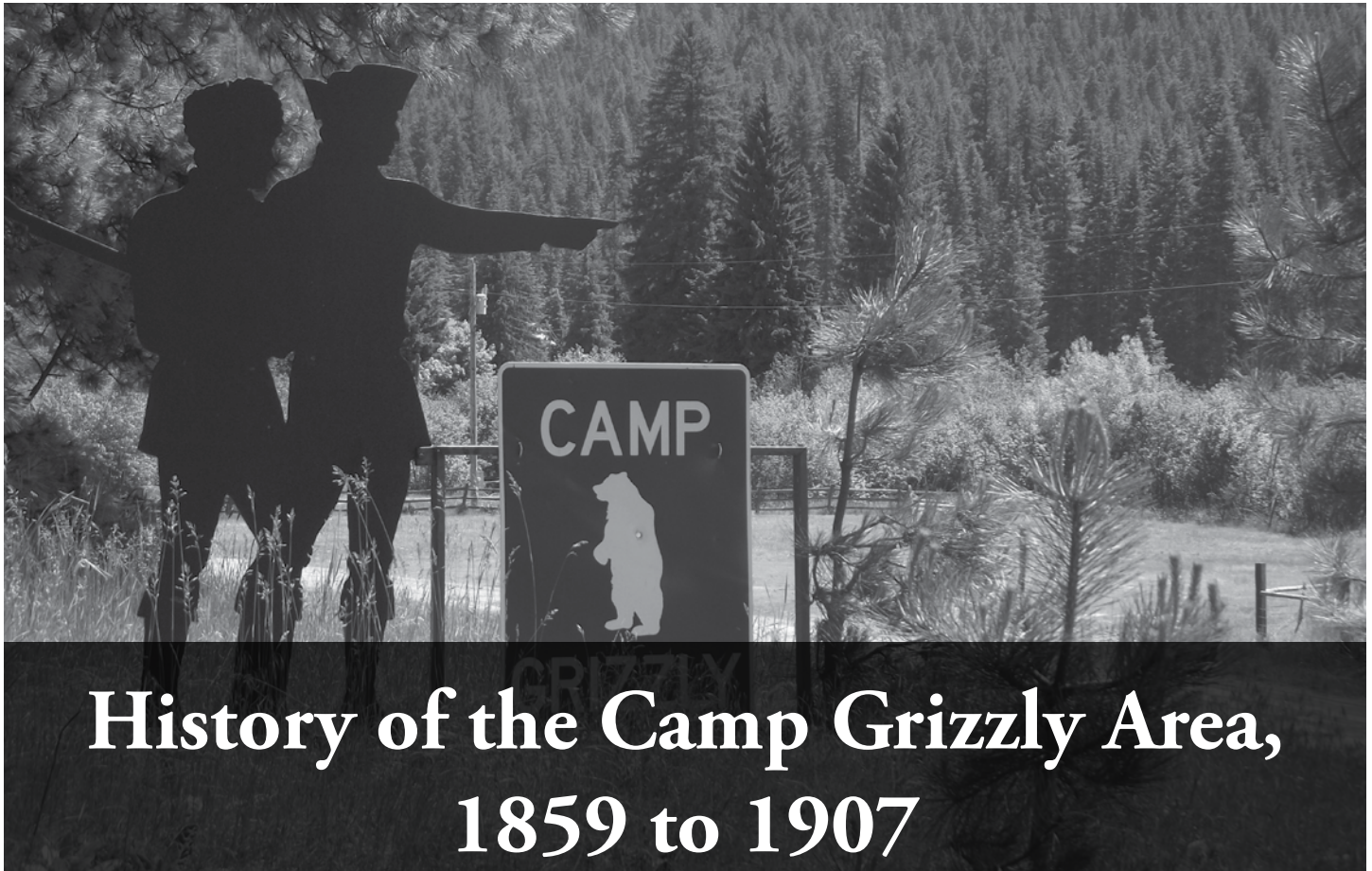


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# History of the Camp Grizzly Area, 1859 to 1907

*by Khaliela Wright*

Today's Boy Scouts of America Camp Grizzly is located on a veritable no-man's-land in Idaho. The area is the southern boundary for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the eastern border of the Palus [Palouse] Tribe, and the northern boundary for the Nez Perce Tribe.<sup>1</sup> The 440 acres which comprise the camp, relatively ignored by the area's earliest inhabitants, have played home to a tremendous amount of history since first being settled by white men over 150 years ago.

In 1988 Will Leaton of Kamiah, Idaho was commissioned to complete a chainsaw carving in honor of Camp Grizzly's 50th anniversary.<sup>2</sup> The now iconic bear overlooks the parade grounds and is a favored spot for Scout troop photographs. The famous grizzly bear appears on everything associated with the camp, from marketing and promotional materials to the t-shirts and belt buckles available in the camp trading post. But, according to Tom Youmans, "There were no grizzlies in the area until the spinning of yarns around Boy Scout campfires."<sup>3</sup>

Having had two Boy Scouts of my own, I am familiar with the campfire tales of rabid grizzly bears ripping through canvas tent panels only to dine on ill-fated loggers (or little Scouts). As fascinating as those tales are, they have nothing to do with how Camp Grizzly got its name because

Latah County is not grizzly bear territory.

In 1859 John Mullan commissioned Gustavus Sohon to explore the area coming down the east side of Lake Coeur d'Alene as a possible route to Hells Gate. The resulting report makes no mention of grizzly bears, nor did any of the Native American guides allude to grizzlies inhabiting the area. If grizzly bear populations did reside in the area, it very likely would have been cited in the report as other dangers were mentioned, whether they were identified first hand or the information was passed on by the local tribes. One such excerpt reads:

"Yah-moh-moh [a Coeur d'Alene guide] made an energetic speech, declared his friendship for the whites, but described the mountains as formidable, the forest and underbrush as impenetrable, and the streams as dangerous, if not impassable, and implored me not to think of exploring that route—that if I did I would perish, and rumor would say the Indians killed me."<sup>4</sup>

So, if not the grizzly bear, how did Camp Grizzly get its name? The answer lies with a man named John Griswold.<sup>5,6</sup>

John Griswold originally settled near present-day Viola, Idaho where he lived with his Nez Perce wife until

white settlers discovered that the area was profitable for farming. After the area became too populated, he moved even farther into the wilderness. When he settled again, it was along the Palouse River at the site of what is present-day Camp Grizzly and Laird Park. As settlements worked their way up the Palouse River, the area where John Griswold and his family lived became known as Griswold Meadow.<sup>5,7</sup>

Gold was discovered in the Hoodoo Mountains in the 1860s shattering Griswold's solitude.<sup>7,8</sup> In 1872 Frank Points discovered gold in the river at the Griswold homesite.<sup>9</sup> The miner refused to vacate the property and taunted Griswold with calls of "squaw-man."<sup>5,7</sup> It is speculated that after the discovery of gold on his property, John Griswold chose to move on yet again. However, knowing men and the greed gold inspires, taken in conjunction with other documented killings in the area, it is possible that John Griswold and his family met a darker fate. Either way, the man and his family disappeared.

By 1874 Ed Graham adapted the name of where the gold was discovered from Griswold Meadow to Grizzle Bar, after which he promptly established Grizzle Camp, which boasted an eating house, saloon, blacksmith, and a pack station that serviced the Hoodoo Mining District, which was legally recognized on April 8, 1875.<sup>7,9</sup>

Grizzle Camp went on to become a booming mining camp from 1877 until the early 1890s.<sup>5,7,10</sup> It was served by three stage coaches per day that ran from Palouse, Washington and was the end of the line for the Wells Fargo freight line. Grizzle Camp served as the trailhead of the Hoodoo Trail, a 14-mile track winding through the mountains, that took all day to traverse with a string of pack mules.<sup>10,11</sup> It is widely estimated that over a million dollars' worth of gold was taken out of the Palouse River during the early days of the Hoodoo Mining District.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

### ***Race for Gold Inflames Racial Tensions***

After the discovery of gold, miners from all over descended to extract the precious metal, drawing the ire of territorial legislatures which promptly enacted laws to tax the newcomers. Idaho's head tax, known as the Foreign Miners Tax, was enacted in 1864 during the third session of the legislature of the Territory of Idaho and amended in the fourth and fifth sessions.<sup>12,13</sup> The 1869 case, Ah Bow



The Palouse River as seen from Laird Park

v. Britten, challenged the law as unjust. Section 1 of the law states, "No Chinaman, Malayan, or other person of the Mongolian race, shall be allowed to take gold from the mines of this territory, or hold, or work a mining claim therein, unless he shall first have obtained a license therefore provided." Section 4 sets the cost of the license at five dollars per month.<sup>12</sup> (Adjusting for inflation that would be \$138.44 per month today.)<sup>14</sup>

In the lawsuit, Ah Bow's complaint focused on Section 6 and the amendments made by the fifth session of the Idaho Territorial Legislature. Section 6 states that all foreigners residing within the territory shall be presumed to be miners, and thus subject to the tax regardless of actual occupation. The amendments gave the power of tax collection to the sheriffs, provided for the seizure of property to satisfy the tax, and allowed for the sale of said property after one hour's verbal notice.<sup>12</sup>

**A Clear Success!**

Have just received a tremendous stock of boots and shoes from the east. White labor,

**No Chinese Work.**

Every pair warranted and I guarantee to save you from one to two dollars on every pair. Flannels, Dress goods, blankets, cloaks, etc., etc. I extend a general invitation to all my friends to call and examine my stock and prices, before purchasing elsewhere. Yours for

**Live and Let Live.**

W. D. ROBBINS,

Shoe store advertisement from *Moscow Mirror*, October 4, 1889

Judge David Noggle sided with the Chinese in his decision. In his opinion, he stated that the sheriffs abused the law by seizing more property than was necessary to satisfy the tax, giving verbal notice in the Chinese camps where no one was around to hear it, and then selling as much as a thousand dollars' worth of property to themselves for as little as ten dollars.<sup>12</sup> However, Noggle stopped short of striking down the law.<sup>12,13</sup>

To reduce the number of foreign miners entering the country, the United States negotiated the Treaty Regulating Immigration from China signed on November 17, 1880.<sup>15</sup> This was followed by the Chinese Exclusion Act on May 6, 1882, which prohibited Chinese laborers, and specifically miners, from immigrating to the United States. However, the act did not apply to anyone who arrived in the United States prior to the passage of the act, nor did it apply to any other groups of Chinese, such as students, teachers, doctors, etc.<sup>16</sup>

The Treaty Regulating Immigration from China specifically states, "Chinese laborers who are now in the United States shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord, and shall be accorded all the rights, privileges, immunities and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation."<sup>15</sup> That passage was ignored in the western states, which had previously levied heavy taxes on Chinese miners.

The 1880 census revealed that 37 Chinese males between the ages of 16 and 52 years resided in the Hoodoo Mining District.<sup>8</sup> The number of men working claims in the Hoodoos rose rapidly, and in 1884 over 1,000 miners were reported to be in the district, of which 300 were Chinese.<sup>9</sup> With race playing into national politics, and with so many

men bunched together working claims, tempers flared and violence erupted.

Latah County lore hints that a local family was reputed to be murderers-for-hire and would kill a "Chinaman" for twenty dollars.<sup>17</sup> (Adjusting for inflation that would be \$553.76 today.)<sup>14</sup> On February 28, 1889 the *Spokane Falls Review* reported that a Chinese man was hanged in Tekoa, Washington for daring to seek work within city limits in direct violation of a town edict.<sup>18</sup> In Gold Creek eleven Chinese miners were killed. Another three were killed on the Palouse River, just a few miles east of where Potlatch stands today.<sup>10</sup> Even more Chinese miners were killed on Camas Creek, some of whom were born in the United States and thus were US citizens.<sup>19</sup> The white population was indifferent to the deaths of Chinese miners, and the local lawmen never bothered to hunt for the murderers.<sup>10, 17</sup>

Anti-Chinese sentiment littered local newspaper articles and advertisements.<sup>8,10</sup> An advertisement appearing in the *Palouse Republican* on October 23, 1893 read, "Business is dull and many white people have no work yet the Chinese laundries are busy. There is a good white laundry in town that deserves liberal patronage because only first class work is done. People should remember Mrs. Beste when in need of laundry work and if anyone is idle and has to go hungry let it be a Chinaman."<sup>20</sup> Similar advertisements for the City Hotel, Delmonico Restaurant, Home Restaurant, and a local cobbler, appeared in the *Moscow Mirror*. The advertisements generally proclaimed white help, white quality, and white prices.<sup>18,21,22,23</sup>

Perhaps the most striking murder case is that of the Strychnine Creek massacre. Many of the Chinese who worked claims in the Hoodoo Mining District organized



The trail head at Excavation Gulch

themselves into tongs. The tongs were comprised entirely of Chinese members, one of whom served as foreman for the crew. During the Strychnine Creek massacre, an entire tong of Chinese miners was killed.

Excavation Gulch lies roughly five miles from Camp Grizzly. The stream that runs through the gulch dries up each summer. Without available water for sluicing, the white prospector on the claim abandoned work and rented the claim to a tong of Chinese miners while he looked for a better strike elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> Despite having to pay rent on the claim and the \$5 per month head tax, the Chinese miners figured the gulch would be a profitable investment.

These miners solved the problem of lack of water by digging a ditch around the ridge and diverting water from a stream in the next draw.<sup>8,10</sup> A second ditch was dug to allow the water to return to the original stream. Once they had access to water for sluicing and working bench placers, their speculative efforts proved to be quite profitable.<sup>10</sup>

When rumor of the bonanza reached the white men down at Grizzle Camp, jealousy struck and a plan was hatched to eradicate the Chinese miners. Because the Chinese used the water in the ditch for everything from mining to drinking, bathing, and cooking, the settlers poured strychnine in the ditch and then waited for the

poison to do its work.<sup>8,10</sup> The ruse was successful and all of the miners in the tong succumbed to the poison. However, the white men from Grizzle Camp were never prosecuted, nor did they profit from the murder. The coveted gold cache was never found.<sup>10</sup>

The exact date of the massacre remains unknown, but it occurred sometime between 1885 and 1889. This much, at least, is certain because the stove in the miners' cabin in Excavation Gulch bore the manufacture date of 1885 and the first recorded mention of Strychnine Creek is August 29, 1889.<sup>8,10</sup>

As gold in the Hoodoo Mining District began to peter out, white animosity toward the Chinese increased. In 1886 white homesteaders obtained an injunction to prevent Chinese men from mining claims they had legally purchased. A sheriff's deputy confiscated all the gold without the benefit of a warrant or court order.<sup>24</sup> In the spring of 1890, Judge Willis Sweet ruled that, "Persons of Chinese descent have no rights whatever to mining lands in the United States."<sup>8,24</sup> In violation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, this rule was applied locally even if the Chinese were United States citizens and the claims were legally obtained. Further, the order stated that Chinese were prohibited from working claims unless it could be proven that they were employed by a white claim holder.<sup>8</sup>



Camp Grizzly, Lakeside Camp

Unfortunately, Judge Sweet's ruling only emboldened the angry white settlers who took it upon themselves to rid the county of Chinese. Ultimately, the Chinese were driven out by white greed and prejudice.<sup>25</sup> When the white men arrived at the claims, the Chinese miners were given two hours to pack up and leave. Then they were robbed on the trail as they fled.<sup>10</sup> By December 1891 all the Chinese miners were gone and the newspaper headline read, "Chinese Ousted from Hoodoo."<sup>8,24,26</sup> After the Chinese miners left, a great number of eager white claim jumpers raced to fill the void.<sup>27</sup>

During the 1890s, agriculture and timber were the dominant industries in the region, though the Hoodoo Mining District was still a going concern. *The Palouse News* ran an occasional column titled "Hoodoo Nuggets" which contained anecdotes, weather reports, promotions, and placering technology.<sup>7</sup> One excerpt reads, "Our camp has been decidedly healthy this winter with the exception of a little nausea of such duration that it finally disgorged the jumpers of the Chinese claims."<sup>7, 27</sup>

Though the column was published under the pseudonym "Hoodoo," it was widely suspected that Frank Points, who at that point was described as "a cultured Virginia gentleman," was the author.<sup>7</sup> The locals seemed to have forgotten that Mr. Points was the same man who ousted John Griswold from his home and insisted on mining Grizzle Bar, which was within sight of the Griswold cabin.

During the recession of 1893, new gold was discovered in the Hoodoos prompting a second wave of miners.<sup>7</sup> This time commercial interests from Spokane, Washington and as far away as Minneapolis, Minnesota hired professional prospectors to work a four-mile section of the Palouse River and dredge to a depth of at least 18 feet.<sup>7,28</sup> Their local representatives were W. H. and J. N. Muncy of Tekoa, Washington.<sup>7,29</sup> Included in this ambitious project were plans to build five miles of road starting at Grizzle Camp and extending into the Hoodoos. However, the venture was not as successful as its investors anticipated. The road never made it past Strychnine Ridge.<sup>7</sup>

### ***The Coming of the Lumber Barons***

Interest in the Hoodoo Mining District continued to be varied after the turn of the century. Timber buyers began purchasing many of the available plots. The establishment of the Potlatch Lumber Company likely consumed all the excess labor in the area and provided regular paychecks for men without the worry and risk that comes with prospecting.<sup>7</sup>

Identifying individual plots purchased by Potlatch Lumber Company at the turn of the century is akin to finding a needle in a haystack. However, one parcel on what now comprises Camp Grizzly, owned by a Ms. Cora N. Tribble, was sold to a Mr. William Codd on September



28, 1903.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that both parties of the sale were speculators. At the time, Cora Tribble was a gun-toting divorcee and single mother of two, who participated in multiple land purchases and sales between 1889 and 1906.<sup>30,31</sup> Mr. William Codd subsequently sold the property to the Potlatch Company on December 20, 1904.<sup>32</sup>

Other claims along the Palouse River that are on land that is now part of Camp Grizzly belonged to T.P. Jones and John Higgins. On February 8, 1909 T. P. Jones and his wife Margery sold their property to Potlatch Lumber Company for a sum of one dollar.<sup>33</sup> Mr. John Higgins who acquired his parcel of land from the U.S. Government on May 5, 1895 made a similar deal.<sup>34</sup> One must wonder if they assumed the plots were worthless once the gold had played out. However, determined treasure hunters can still find gold in and along the Palouse River today.<sup>10,19</sup> It may even be possible to stumble across an old cache of gold from one of the many murdered miners.<sup>19</sup> The remainder of the property now known as Camp Grizzly was transferred to Potlatch Lumber Company from the State of Idaho on April 20, 1907.<sup>35</sup>

While the mining and logging industries operated in tandem for a number of years after 1907, that period of history is dominated by timber baron William Deary. Camp Grizzly's relationship with the Potlatch Corporation and its managers, William Deary and Allison Laird, would be a good subject for another article.

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*Khaliela Wright teaches at the Pullman Campus of Spokane Falls Community College, serves as the Creative Writing Club adviser, and oversees the publication of the school's annual anthology. Her short stories have won awards from the Idaho Writers Guild and IDAHO Magazine. In her free time, she serves as the President of the Palouse Writers Guild, works as a freelance writer for blogs and magazines, writes book reviews, and creates political cartoons for news outlets.*

# The Latah County Historical Society: *50 Years of Progress*

*Compiled by LeNelle McInturff  
in collaboration with Steve Talbott and Denise Thomson*



Dedication ceremony at McConnell Mansion for the flagpole, a gift from the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion (1974) (All photos from LCHS collections unless otherwise noted)

The Latah County Historical Society (LCHS) marks its 50th anniversary in 2018, a good time to pause and reflect on the past as it continues to chart plans for the future. In 1988 Mary E. Reed, who was first a volunteer, then a trustee, then a long-time director, wrote a thorough summary of the Society's first twenty years, its triumphs and struggles and overall progress. Her work was published that year in two parts in the *Latah Legacy* and is briefly summarized here. Thirty years

later we take another look back at where we've been, where we are now, and some of the many steps along the way, using information gleaned from LCHS board meeting minutes, director's and curator's reports, past issues of the *Latah Legacy* and quarterly newsletters, and related documents from the archives, and consultations with Dan Crandall and Nancy Ruth Peterson.

## *The First Twenty Years, in Brief*

From its roots in the Latah County Pioneer Association founded in 1891 and the Moscow Historical Club formed in 1895, the Latah County Historical Society we know today has grown into a strong organization that provides leadership and inspiration to like-minded groups throughout the state. There have been several name changes along the way. The Latah County Pioneer Association established the Latah County Pioneer Historical Museum Association whose board of directors included representatives from the Pioneer Association and the Moscow Historical Club. Thankfully, the LCPHMA shortened its name to the Latah County Museum Society in 1973. The organization name was officially changed to the Latah County Historical Society in 1978 to reflect its wider scope of activities in preserving, sharing and celebrating the history of Latah County, in addition to its goal of finding a way to display artifacts telling the area's history.

It was in 1968 that Latah County officially accepted as its property the donation of the home now known as McConnell Mansion, built in 1886 by William J. McConnell, who later became the third governor of Idaho. The house's last private owner, Dr. Frederic Church, had bequeathed the building to the county in his handwritten will with the intent that it be used for a museum and meeting place. He named the Latah County Pioneer Association, the Moscow Historical Club, and "other cultural organizations" as beneficiaries. With this gift, it looked like the long-time goal of the pioneer and museum associations to have a permanent location for their museum collections could become a reality.

However, the McConnell Mansion did not receive a clean bill of health when it was first examined by Professor Ellis Burcaw of the University of Idaho's Museology Department. There was serious concern that the building would not be suitable for a museum due to its basic structural characteristics and its location which would not allow room for expansion. In addition, developing and maintaining a museum facility takes money, which was in short supply at that time, and people to run the facility, whether they be paid staff or volunteers.

Despite the negative structural appraisal, determined members of the museum association decided to push on and do what they could to transform the building into a house museum. Dedicated members solicited financial support and sought donations of materials and labor from local businesses, while enthusiastic volunteers provided the people power to make needed repairs and necessary improvements to the house. County commissioners were supportive of their efforts and made annual allocations to help fund a county museum. The grand opening of McConnell Mansion was held on April 30, 1971.

In the following years, though financial stability was elusive, annual budgets were patched together from a combination of membership dues, fluctuating annual allocations from the



Volunteers conducted interviews at local nursing homes for the oral history project initiated in 1973.

County, successful grant applications, sales of publications, general donations, and multiple fundraising activities. Grants from various state and federal agencies and Latah County maintenance funds were used for many of the major repairs and improvements to the mansion. All the chimneys were repaired, the back porch and the second floor balcony were redone, the roof and sidewalks were replaced, decaying trees were removed from the landscape, and a modern security system was installed in the McConnell house. General donations funded smaller projects like new carpets, lace curtains and velvet drapes for the parlors.

In what turned out to be a major step in the Society's development, a special committee was formed in support of an ambitious oral history project that was launched in 1973 to collect the county's history. As Mary E. Reed wrote in "The First Ten Years," her 1988 article for the *Latah Legacy*, "The project was underway, and perhaps no one realized that it would continue to expand to become one of the largest collections of its kind and a model for local historical societies throughout the nation." The tapes from the many hours of interviews were painstakingly transcribed, the transcripts indexed, and all were filed carefully away. In addition, several approaches to sharing the collected histories with the public were explored, including through print and broadcast media.

In another avenue of development, publications became a good source of income for the Society's efforts and a good way to connect with the larger community. Ken Platt wrote the first in a series of local history papers, and the proceeds from two of his books were used to set up a publications fund. Other booklets and local history papers followed. The Society republished the book *Buffalo Coat* by Carol Ryrie Brink, who had grown up in Moscow and wrote the book as a fictionalized version of local historical events. In the fall of 1983 an open house was held to announce the publication of *A Great Good Country: A Guide to Historic Moscow and Latah*



1984 LCHS Board of Trustees: (standing l to r) Leonard Ashbaugh, Herman Ronnenberg, Dwight Strong, Gainford Mix, Director Mary Reed, Duane LeTourneau, Donna Bray, Laura Bartell, Stan Shepard, John Talbott, Steve Talbott; (seated) Keith Petersen, Leora Stillinger, Cora Knott, Lillian Otness



Lillian Otness signs copies of *A Great Good Country* (1983)



The apartment building destined to become the LCHS Centennial Annex (1990)

*County, Idaho* by Lillian Woodworth Otness, with contributing writers Carolyn Gravelle, John B. Miller, and Richard C. Waldbauer. Another successful publishing venture was the award-winning book *Company Town: Potlatch, Idaho, and the Potlatch Lumber Company*

written by Keith Petersen, who had been the Society's director from 1977 to 1981.

In the beginning, limited paid staff and an extensive force of volunteers accomplished the work of the Society. Steve Talbott was hired as a caretaker, identifying maintenance

and repair needs, and providing skilled labor; he lived in the house during early renovations. Larry French served as a paid director for the Society, but only for three months per year. By 1975 year-round staffing was needed. With funding from the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program, the Society was able to hire Lee Magnuson as its first full-time staff member, a professionally trained curator. The curator was renamed director during Keith Petersen's tenure in the position. After Keith's resignation in 1981 the position was filled on a short-term or interim basis by Kit Freudenberg and Carol Young until Mary Reed was hired as director in 1983.

### ***The Next Thirty Years***

By 1988 the Latah County Historical Society was enjoying a good reputation as a solid professional historical organization. Despite recent funding losses due to program changes in federal government, things were looking up for the Society in many ways. It was well on its way to achieving its goal announced in 1983 of raising \$100,000 to establish an endowment fund. The book *Company Town* by Keith Petersen was in its second printing. Plans and celebrations marking the Latah County and State of Idaho centennials were underway. Three part-time staff and a host of volunteers worked together to present programs and activities and tackle a variety of projects. An apartment building just across the intersection from McConnell Mansion had been donated to the Society by Calvin and Kathleen Warnick.

The gift of the apartment building in 1988 was the first major donation received by LCHS, not counting the original bequeathal of the McConnell house to Latah County. The gift marks a definite turning point in the Society's history. It meant there finally could be separate space for library and research archives, textile and object collections, and staff offices, and McConnell Mansion could truly become an historical house museum.

### ***Centennial Annex***

The newly acquired building was by no means move-in-ready in 1988. The building consisted of multiple apartments with each one including small rooms and a bathroom. For the Society's purposes, only one or two bathrooms would be needed, and there would be no need for any bathtubs or showers. Much remodeling and renovating would be required before the space could be put into full service as the Centennial Annex. A three-year plan was developed. Keith Petersen promptly wrote a challenge grant application for \$40,000 to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to help with renovations, and volunteers and staff began remodeling a room on the upper floor to house the textile collection. When the NEH announced in December 1988 that the challenge grant was successful, a planned fund raising campaign was activated.



Volunteers Dana Dawes and Pam Peterson remove carpet and prepare the annex for occupancy. (1990)

A September 1990 report listed progress made by volunteers working to get the Annex ready for business. Walls had been washed and painted, woodwork had been washed, carpets had been removed, bushes outside had been trimmed or removed, ceiling damage had been repaired, basement storage areas had been cleaned and painted, and shelving had been purchased. The furnace had been refurbished by McCoy Plumbing and Heating. Electrical work was in progress, as was the installation of a phone system to ring in both the Mansion and the Annex. It was estimated that it would cost about \$1,800 to sand and refinish the hardwood floors on the street level of the building. Appliances were removed and sold for LCHS by Howard Hughes Appliance.

Centennial Annex was officially dedicated on October 12, 1991. Including in-kind donations of time, labor, and materials, the Society had raised \$120,000 in non-federal funds to receive the \$40,000 challenge grant from NEH for the annex restoration project and to establish an endowment to maintain the facility and preserve historical materials.

Renovation of the building was far from complete on its opening in 1991. A committee was formed to develop a master plan for landscaping around the building. A thorough inspection by an architectural consultant in 1993 identified and prioritized a formidable list of further needed repairs that included installing a new roof, repairing the rear



Volunteers from the Farmhouse Fraternity help with the move from McConnell Mansion to Centennial Annex. (1990)



Volunteers work on landscaping the grounds around the annex. (1992)



Workers rebuild the south wall of Centennial Annex after removing the stair tower. (1993)

wall, removing the stair tower, painting exterior woodwork, installing new rain gutters, and adding a security system. A first step was accomplished with the removal in September of the back stair tower, which had been pulling away from the building and threatening the brick façade. In 1994 the back wall of the annex was rebuilt, and in 1995 a security system was installed. Progress was being made on the long list of to-do's. A more cosmetic improvement to Centennial Annex was the update to the fireplace in 1993 with tiles, and plaques and tiles commemorating donors during the Challenge Grant were installed in the annex entryway.

Improvements to Centennial Annex continued and in 2005, largely through the efforts of volunteers, the storage area in the basement received a coat of fire-retardant paint, new shelving and lighting. The next year fireproof filing cabinets were installed on the main floor. Then in 2007 the annex was re-plumbed and the attic was insulated. The receipt of surplus museum storage units valued at \$30,000 from the National Park Service site at Spalding in 2008 promised a real boost for appropriate storage of object collections in the basement. The installation of a new telephone system and a universal access ramp for the front entrance were under discussion.

A universal access committee was formed the next year to research and plan for what would be a major project estimated to cost around \$50,000. The timing was not ideal due to the nationwide financial crisis beginning that year. The County experienced serious budget reductions, and the Society's endowment managed by the Latah County Foundation realized losses of nearly \$200,000. Nevertheless, the board of directors requested bids for architectural services for the access project. Grant applications and fundraisers followed and the \$50,000+ project was completed in 2010, resulting in an attractive, safe and comfortable entryway accessible to all.

Late in 2009 a pipe in the heating system in the east wall on the main floor of the Annex burst and water spurting from the wall soaked documents stored in boxes in the nearby archive collection. As part of the preliminary work for the universal access project an upgrade to the front entrance of the Annex was completed. While plumbing in most related areas had been disconnected during the upgrade process and then reconnected, the east wall heating system had not been turned on again and water froze in the pipes. When the pipes burst, irreplaceable archived papers were damaged. A freeze-drying process to stabilize the wet documents was contemplated, but it was decided there wasn't sufficient volume to warrant that action. Instead, stacks of documents were carefully spread on all available flat surfaces in the Annex, rotated and moved regularly to promote even drying, so they could slowly be separated into individual sheets of paper. Soon after this exercise, all the extraneous pipes and plumbing connections in the annex were decommissioned to ensure there would be no repeats of burst pipes in unused plumbing.

Major building repairs and maintenance have again been a focus for fundraising efforts in the last few years. Over time the weight of the rolling shelves holding the Society's extensive document archives had caused settling of the floor which allowed the shelves to move unbidden with the risk of squeezing unsuspecting researchers between shelf sections. In 2014 the floor of the archive room was shored up as recommended by a structural engineer. In 2015 further reinforcement of the floor and leveling of the rolling shelves was completed. A new alarm system was installed in the Annex in 2017 to replace the aging unreliable unit that had been put in place over twenty years earlier. In 2018 the seriously deteriorating back wall of the Annex required extensive structural repair that involved raising the building so new footings could be installed and strengthening the wall by bricking in some of the windows. Fortunately reserve funds were sufficient to cover the \$25,000 emergency repairs.

The Annex now provides shared office space for the full-time curator and the part-time museum aide, a library/research room, archive storage, a volunteer work area, a restroom, and a small kitchen in the collection of rooms on the ground floor. The upstairs houses the textile collection, a separate office for the executive director, and a small storage and work space for staff. The assorted small rooms and closets in the basement hold much of the Society's objects collections. Volunteers and interns continue work to improve the organization of the various categories of collections amid crowded spaces.

### ***McConnell Mansion***

Restoration of McConnell Mansion has continued over time. In 1989 the Idaho Legislature removed the annual limit on historical society funding by county governments. That year the Latah County commissioners opted to use contingency funds for asbestos abatement in the Mansion. Volunteer restoration activities focused on the kitchen and maid's room on the first floor and a university student bedroom upstairs. The plan was to restore the kitchen to the 1920s-30s era. A setback came in 1993 when a radiator pipe in the attic of the mansion broke, showering water on the floors below. Fortunately, the resulting damage was mostly confined to unrestored rooms, the kitchen, and one upstairs bedroom; insurance covered the cost of repairs.

In 1997 furnishings were refurbished in the mansion. Curator Joann Jones and volunteers conducted extensive research to determine original materials and to find fabrics and designs that would match the originals for such items as wallpaper, floor coverings, and draperies for the relevant time period. An entry ramp to the south door was added to provide smooth access to the house from the sidewalk leading to the alley on the east side of the house. The improvement made the mansion accessible to all and satisfied requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The bathroom and pantry off the kitchen were restored and officially opened on May 21, 1999.



New carpeting in McConnell Mansion was installed by Waterman's Floor Covering. (1986)



Sheila Wells installs new wallpaper in the kitchen. (1994)

Most of the artifacts held in the Society's collections have been generously donated, but in 2001 the Society purchased a Redwork signature quilt as a unique addition to its quilt collection, appropriately using funds from the Gladys Bellinger bequest. Gladys Bellinger had been a long-time member of LCHS, serving for a time on its board, and had been director of the School of Home Economics at the University of Idaho. She had an appreciation for local history and beautiful artifacts. The quilt story began with an email from an Oregon woman who wondered if the historical society would be interested in purchasing a quilt of unknown origin that included many embroidered names of individuals and the words "Moscow Baptist Church, Idaho." The quilt contains well over 250 names, many of them familiar as early Moscow residents, and provides a unique window into our local past. One quilt square is inscribed "Ladies Industrial Society of the Moscow Baptist Church, Idaho, May 8, 1897" and probably indicates the year the quilt was stitched



A broken radiator pipe in the attic resulted in water damage on lower floors, mostly in the kitchen area and unrestored rooms. (1993)

together. For a time the quilt was displayed on the bed in the restored second floor bedroom in the Mansion.

The national bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery inspired much history-related activity throughout the northwest. LCHS received \$15,000 from the Idaho Governor's Lewis & Clark Trail Committee to help fund improvements to visitor services and to renovate the master bedroom in McConnell Mansion. The renovated bedroom officially opened at the Ice Cream Social on July 25, 2003. Two more bedrooms on the second floor were renovated in 2004, and two other upstairs rooms were cleared and restored in 2007. Support posts in the basement were stabilized in 2008 using funding from an Idaho Trust grant matched by Latah County. An historic maple tree south of the Mansion had to be removed in 2009 due to deterioration caused by rot. A new alarm system, including smoke detectors and water/temperature protection, was installed in 2012 at a cost of \$8,000 to the County. The Mansion suffered a loss of sorts when the State Historical Society requested the return to Boise in 2013 of the large portrait of Governor McConnell that had long been displayed over the fireplace in the back parlor.





Dedication of entry ramp installed at south door of McConnell Mansion allowing access in compliance with ADA requirements (1997)



Workers from North Country Landscaping rebuild the rock wall at McConnell Mansion. (1999)



The kitchen in the mansion was restored to the 1920s-1930s era. in matching fabric, now reside once more in the front parlor of the Mansion.



The southwest corner of McConnell Mansion (2001)

Though the McConnell portrait remains in Boise today, a McConnell recovery a long time in coming was completed in fall 2018. A three-piece parlor set that had been owned by the McConnell family before being passed to Erland and Greta Marie Ramstedt, and later distributed among their heirs, was reunited in Moscow. The settee and two chairs, freshly reupholstered

In 2016 a preliminary evaluation of McConnell Mansion by an Idaho historical architect revealed the need for repairs and maintenance to the county-owned house that could total over \$175,000. Major projects included would be a new roof to replace a leaking one, new siding to replace the current rust-stained aluminum siding, and energy efficient windows to replace the original single-panes, all while preserving as much as possible the look of the 1886 original structure. The work needed is made more difficult by the complexity of the building and the space limitations for moving needed equipment to the site. Latah County and the City of Moscow are committed to help with financing, and additional fundraising will be a focus for LCHS. It is hoped that major progress can be made over the next five to eight years to preserve this one-of-a-kind resource.



Bustle dresses on display in the exhibit celebrating the centennial of McConnell Mansion (1986)



Early slot machines were part of the exhibit for the Latah County Centennial. (1988)



A parade was held in Moscow to mark the State of Idaho Centennial. (1990)

### ***Outreach, Exhibits, and Education***

Centennial celebrations abounded in the years following 1988 as the State of Idaho, Latah County and other local entities marked important milestones. Latah County was created by an act of the US Congress on May 14, 1888. In 1988 LCHS hosted a garden party at McConnell Mansion to celebrate the occasion. The city of Genesee celebrated its 100th anniversary on October 21, 1989. The spring issue of the *Latah Legacy* that year was dedicated to the Genesee Centennial and was filled with articles and vignettes covering many aspects of the town's history. Idaho was admitted to the Union as the 43rd state on July 3, 1890. In 1990 LCHS

staff and volunteers were kept busy with celebrations of 100 years of statehood throughout the county: Statehood Day in Bovill, an old-fashioned Chautauqua at the University of Idaho, a "Coming Home to Latah County" parade and exhibit in Moscow, an historical park dedication in Potlatch, a time capsule/centennial bench and tree event in Kendrick, an historical book publication in Juliaetta, and a high school exchange student program in Troy. Kendrick also celebrated 100 years in 1990, and the spring 1991 issue of the *Latah Legacy* was compiled and edited by Carolyn Gravelle as a "centennial salute" to that town. Both Juliaetta and Troy (originally named Vollmer) were incorporated in 1892. The spring 1992 edition of the *Latah Legacy* featured centennial salutes to Juliaetta, Troy, the Pleiades Club of Moscow, and the *Lewiston Tribune*.

In 1991 the general membership of the Society approved changes to its mission statement that brought new emphasis to educational programming and cooperation with other institutions in the museum field in addition to collecting, preserving, interpreting, and disseminating county history. Exhibits in the Mansion expanded as staff, office equipment, archives and collections were moved from the house to Centennial Annex. A variety of exhibits could be developed and frequently changed to provide museum visitors with new experiences on each visit. In 1992 LCHS sponsored traveling exhibits from the Smithsonian Institution titled "What Style Is It?" and "Family Folklore." The following year the first of three exhibits covering World War II opened



LCHS Director Mary E. Reed, dressed as the hired girl, hosts a school-group tour of McConnell Mansion. (1998)

in May designed by LCHS staff and volunteers. Then “The Lives of a House” told the history of McConnell Mansion and the people who lived there. “There was Always Sunshine” told the story of the Lieuallen, Woodworth, Sether, and Otness families, early Moscow residents. “Alf Dunn: Storyteller in Words and Color” and “Dialog by a Whittler” exhibits focused on Dunn’s artwork and the whittled works of Ted Kalchmer of Potlatch.

To reach a larger audience, executive director Mary Reed also took exhibits, tours, and programming outside the Mansion to schools and the general public. A slide program on Carol Ryrie Brink presented in school classrooms soon morphed into a first-person interpretation of the author by Mary. She also dressed up as the Mansion’s hired girl when giving house tours to school groups. A trunk full of Latah County history made trips to schools around the county. Walking tours of downtown Moscow were offered for school children, and tours of the Fort Russell neighborhood were given for a Teachers Institute sponsored by the Idaho Humanities Council and for other groups. Guided tours of the older sections of the Moscow Cemetery began in the late 1990s and repeatedly drew fascinated audiences.

The Summer of Discovery 2003 festivities included concerts, lectures, historical presentations and portrayals, and launched the multi-year celebration in Latah County of the Lewis and Clark exploration. Cooperating organizations included LCHS, the Moscow Arts Commission, the UI Laboratory of Anthropology, the Appaloosa Museum and Heritage Center, the Moscow Public Library, and the Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre.



Steve and Chris Talbott check out the “Century of Change” exhibit. (2001)



An enlarged photo of a Troy beauty shop provided the backdrop for a display about hair in the LCHS booth at the Latah County Fair. (2015)

“The Wall that Heals” visited Moscow in 1998 and evoked strong emotions as locals viewed the half-size replica of the national Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the accompanying exhibit of materials left at the Wall. In fall 2017 LCHS organized a well-received series of discussions held in the American Legion Cabin in Moscow in conjunction with the Ken Burns PBS documentary about the Vietnam War. A panel of local Vietnam veterans shared their varied experiences and perspectives on the documentary with community members.

For six weeks from December 2016 to January 2017, LCHS and the City of Moscow co-hosted a traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit titled *Water/Ways* (some assembly required). The exhibit came packaged in a number of carefully labeled, large containers and was assembled by a volunteer crew, with all three floors of City Hall put into use for parts of the display. LCHS was responsible for adding local content to the exhibit. A series of lectures related to various aspects of water, its uses and effects, and a bus tour of water in Latah County, along with other activities, complemented the exhibit.

Moscow Historical Club and Latah County Pioneer Association merge (1968)

Oral History Project launched (1973)

Grand opening of McConnell Mansion Museum (1971)


First Annual Ice Cream Social (1976)

First Harvest Dinner (1980)

Carol Ryrie Brink exhibit (1982)

Endowment Fund initiated (1983)

McConnell Mansion Centennial (1986)

 Latah County Historical Society



The traveling Smithsonian exhibit *Water/Ways* required some assembly by volunteers in Moscow's City Hall. Curator Zach Wnek was a member of the crew. (2016)



The War Garden planted in the backyard of McConnell Mansion was part of the World War I exhibit spanning 18 months. (2017)

The first stage of an ambitious 18-month exhibit on World War I in Latah County was launched in April 2017 in McConnell Mansion on the 100th anniversary of the United States entry into the war. The exhibit evolved in 6-month segments and featured relevant displays, parlor talks and presentations, and a war garden in the backyard of the Mansion before closing in November 2018 on the 100th anniversary of the armistice of the “war to end all wars.”

### ***Communications and Technology***

The need for regular communications was recognized early on to inform members of happenings and to maintain their interest and support. The forms and manner of distribution have evolved over the years. The *Latah Legacy* was originally an offshoot of the *Quarterly Bulletin* of the Latah County Museum Society, which began in 1972 as a mimeographed newsletter. In 1980 the *Quarterly* became *Latah Legacy* and a separate newsletter was mailed to Society members on a quarterly basis. In a note from the editor's desk in the Spring 1992 issue, Bert Cross announced that “This is the first issue of the *Legacy* in which we are able to use our own laser printer” – a NEC Silentwriter Model 95. Today the *Legacy* is printed locally in a professional print shop; newsletters are still distributed quarterly and offered in either print or digital format. The *Legacy* publication schedule has varied from one to as many as four issues per year. It is now published annually. In the spring 1992 issue Cross noted that manuscripts were needed for publication in the journal. Topics could include “autobiography, biography, stories of particular events, development of industries, and notes about interesting people in the past.” Though the equipment used for the journal and the printing process have changed over



Centennial Annex donated to LCHS (1988)

Latah County Historical Foundation established (1995)

Educational programs expanded (1990s - present)



"A Century of Change" exhibit commemorates Latah County (2001)



125th Anniversary of McConnell Mansion (2011)

LCHS receives Sister Alfreda Award from ISHS, IHT, & IHC (2015)



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the intervening years, the need for manuscripts remains a constant today.

Much work has been done in recent years to bring LCHS and its archives and collections fully into the 21st century using modern technologies. PastPerfect Museum software was installed in 2005 to computerize records for the Society's collections of documents, library materials, photographs, and objects. A new computer system was installed by the County in 2006 to link the Society to the Latah County computer network. In 2007 all issues of the journal *Latah Legacy* were digitized and placed on disc, and the process of putting the extensive photograph collection into digital format began. A grant from the Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) paid for a laptop computer in 2009 for working with the collections, and another ISHS grant in 2010 helped improve records storage. In 2014 the Digital Bridge Project eliminated the need for the trusty old card catalog in the Centennial Annex. In a massive effort over several months, volunteers and staff entered information from card catalog records and pamphlet and small collections storage boxes into the PastPerfect database. Staff and visitors can now search the database to quickly identify and locate photos, physical objects, documents and other research materials of interest in the collections.

Though the Society had been part of the World Wide Web with its own website for some time, considerable changes have come about in the last five years. The website was updated, and Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts were set up. The first entry on the LCHS blog "Notes from the Latah County Historical Society" was posted on April 19, 2013. A major overhaul of the website in 2015 updated and

expanded the Society's online presence considerably. Coming events, activities, and announcements are now communicated to members quickly and efficiently via email and Facebook posts. In 2017 selected exhibits from the Society's collections were placed in the Google Cultural Institute online museum Google Arts & Culture.

**Latah County Historical Society**  
1968 - 2018: 50 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO LOCAL HISTORY

VISIT ABOUT SUPPORT EVENTS RESOURCES BLOG SHOP

ORAL HISTORY JOURNALS & NEWSPAPERS PHOTOS RESEARCH FEES LATAH LEGACY SELF-GUIDED TOURS

**Resources**  
Please note that many of our resources are not yet online. If you would like to browse the collections in person, we invite you to visit the Centennial Annex Tuesday through Friday, from 8am to 4pm.  
*Let us help you with your research!*

**Oral History**  
The University of Idaho Library Digital Collections presents digitized audio recordings together with their indexes and transcripts for over 300 detailed recollections of life from the early 20th century. These oral histories were first conducted and collected in the mid-1970s by the Latah County Historical Society.  
GO THERE

**Online Collections**  
The Latah County Historical Society has partnered with the Google Cultural Institute to bring our collections online. The first collection we have brought online is our Psycliana collection with more coming soon.  
GO THERE

**Photos**  
The University of Idaho Library Digital Collections offers an online archive of photos from the town of Bovill.  
GO THERE

**Newspapers**  
The J-K Heritage Foundation has an online archive of digitized newspapers for the town of Juliaetta from 1914 to 1937, and for the town of Kendrick from 1891 to 1950 and from 1950 to 1998.  
GO THERE

Latah County Historical Society is online at [www.latahcountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.latahcountyhistoricalsociety.org) (2018)



Kitchen clean-up crew at the annual Ham Dinner: (l to r) Connie DeWitt, Anna Conditt, Richard Naskali, Harry DeWitt, and Duane LeTourneau (1992)



Tours of the Moscow City Cemetery, here led by Mary E. Reed, are ever popular. (1998)

### ***Fundraising***

Fundraising is a never-ending activity for nonprofit organizations like LCHS. The ham dinner that was first held in the fall of 1980 to offset a decrease in funding from the County has been a cornerstone activity to raise significant funds in the years since. Initially the Society provided the ham, and the rest of the meal was potluck provided by the diners. Over the years turkey was added to the menu and

the entire meal, renamed the Harvest Dinner, was provided by LCHS with an array of homemade desserts prepared by volunteers. A silent auction and a display of goods and merchandise from the Museum Store have added to the festivities. In 2017 a new menu featuring pea soup and lentil chili was developed for a harvest meal oriented more toward local crops. Homemade desserts are still a highlight of the gathering.

The multi-course Victorian Tea held each May in the McConnell Mansion has also been a popular and successful fundraiser for years. It provides an opportunity for guests to dress up, tour the house, and enjoy tasty fare provided by volunteers. The Ice Cream Social in July and the Victorian Christmas with wassail and homemade cookies in December are free and attract hundreds of visitors each year. Though there is no charge for these two events or for general entry to the Mansion, many attendees are moved to show their appreciation with voluntary contributions on each visit.

The Society has also explored a number of sources of revenue related to publications. Through a cooperative agreement with Washington State University Press in 1993 four of Carol Ryrie Brink's books (*Buffalo Coat*, *Strangers in the Forest*, *Snow in the River*, and *A Chain of Hands*) were reprinted in paperback with forewords written by Mary E. Reed. The first sales of the new reprints were made during "An Evening in Honor of Carol Ryrie Brink," co-hosted with the Moscow Library and WSU Press. The program included a tape of Mrs. Brink telling about herself and offering advice for those aspiring to be writers. Clarice Sampson also shared her memories of Carol Ryrie and her aunt Elsie. In 1995 "A Chain of Hands" celebration marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Carol Ryrie Brink; her son and daughter visited Moscow and a 3.5-acre nature park off Mountain View Road was dedicated in her name. Mrs. Brink's books continue to be "best sellers" in the museum store.

In her first year as executive director, Dulce Kersting-Lark undertook a large writing project as another fundraiser for the Society. With help from a group of volunteers researching individuals proposed for inclusion in the book, she authored *Legendary Locals of Moscow*, an imprint of Arcadia Publishing, printed in 2015. Initial sales were brisk at the launch party held in the fall in the 1912 Center where many local legends and family representatives were present. Arcadia Publishing had previously printed two Images of America series books, *Moscow* and *Latah County*, and the book *Moscow: Living and Learning on the Palouse*, all authored by Julie R. Monroe, a long-time LCHS volunteer. In 2017 a committee was formed to work on an update of the book *A Great Good Country* by Lillian Otness, first published by LCHS in 1983. Since the book is out of print but still in demand as a guide to Moscow and Latah County, the goal is to produce a reprint incorporating changes that have occurred to historic buildings and sites over the last 35 years.

*McConnell Mansion and Its Residents* and a collection of transcripts of letters written by WWI soldiers to their families in Latah County are the two latest additions to the assortment of smaller booklets available for purchase in the museum store in the Mansion.

In 2010 a bus tour fundraiser was launched under Dan Crandall's watch as executive director. The locally well-known "Bovill Run" had long been a drinking adventure for carloads of mostly college students that involved stops at a number of bars and taverns in assorted small towns of northern Latah



Children's dress-up activity area at the annual Ice Cream Social (2002)

County. Faculty in the geology department at the University of Idaho had developed a geological Bovill Run as a field trip for students in an introductory geology course. It followed a similar route, but was conducted during daylight hours and involved stops at area rock formations rather than drinking establishments. The LCHS version of the run added a history component to the geology tour, de-emphasized the alcohol activity, and attracted a noticeably more mature clientele. Advance tickets soon sold out for the two busloads in the initial offering featuring stops in Potlatch, Deary, Bovill and Troy in 2010, prompting plans for more tours in the future. At each stop local residents shared some of the history of their town, and guides on each bus offered geological and historical information as the buses moved from town to town. In 2012 Earl Bennett, LCHS Board member, retired geology professor, and guide on the Bovill runs, developed a "Bunchgrass and Canyons Tour" with stops focusing on the history and geology of southern Latah County.

In 2014 a bus tour with a focus on the Mullan Road was led by Keith Petersen, author of *John Mullan: The Tumultuous Life of a Western Road Builder*. The tour covered relevant territory in northern Idaho and eastern Washington. Earl Bennett recently developed a new bus tour of historic churches and cemeteries in Latah County. Its first offering in October 2018 included six church/cemetery stops beginning with the Moscow cemetery and ending with a drive by all the churches of Troy. Lunch was in Genesee. The afternoon part of the tour included skillful maneuvering of the 50+-passenger bus around the hairpin curves between Genesee and Juliaetta on the way to more churches and cemeteries.

Several new types of fundraisers have been developed in recent years to increase variety and reach a wider audience. The first "Brews and BBQ" was held in spring 2014 in the American Legion Cabin and featured a talk on the local history of beer brewing by local expert Herman Ronnenberg. The admission fee entitled the purchaser to one beer, and



The Harvest Dinner crowd in the Moscow Junior High School multipurpose room (2000)



The first “Brews & BBQ” fundraiser was held in the American Legion Cabin in Moscow. The event has since outgrown the space. (2014)



The first LCHS bus tour of Latah County churches and cemeteries included a stop at Wild Rose Cemetery and chapel building outside Kendrick in October 2018. (Photo courtesy of Earl Bennett)

refills and barbecue provided by a local brewer and local eatery were available for purchase. The event, now called “Suds with a Scholar,” has grown in popularity each year and has relocated to the larger event center facility at the county fairgrounds.

A “Trinket or Treasure” event, patterned after the popular PBS “Antiques Roadshow” program, was held in the 1912 Center in summer 2015. For a \$5 per item fee, participants could bring in up to three items to be appraised by regional antique dealers. Walking tacos, beverages and homemade sweet treats were available for purchase as people waited for their turn with an appraiser.

LCHS, Heart of the Arts, Inc., and the Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre joined forces in August 2017 for a

progressive dinner fundraiser to benefit all three organizations. “Dine through Time” spanned the 1920s, the 1910s, and the late 1800s as diners moved through the three historical venues. The evening began at the restored Kenworthy Theatre with premium appetizers and champagne cocktails, followed by a short film about each of the three non-profits. Guests then strolled to The Great Room at the 1912 Center on Third Street for a family-style multi-course dinner. The meal finished across Second Street with homemade desserts served outdoors at the McConnell Mansion and live music performed by the Cherry Sisters Revival. It was a magical and memorable evening where guests had the option to dress in period attire and truly get into the spirit of the event.

### *Finances*

An endowment fund was first initiated in 1983 with a goal that seemed at the time rather unrealistic. Fundraising greatly surpassed hopes and expectations, however, and the ambitious goal of \$100,000 was achieved by 1989. In 1990 the endowment began providing annual support for Society operations. As the endowment continued to grow through memorial gifts, legacy gifts from estates, and donations to the annual campaign, it was decided that a more formal mechanism for managing the fund was needed. The Latah County Historical Foundation was established in 1995 as a separate entity to invest the endowment funds to provide perpetual financial support for LCHS. With the help of a professional investment advisor, the board of directors of the Foundation now oversees an investment portfolio that currently provides an annual payout of over one-third of the Society’s annual budget, using only earnings and preserving the endowment’s capital. An annual giving campaign was inaugurated in 1990 to continue increasing the endowment and to help provide additional financial stability. Gifts to the annual campaign can be earmarked for general operations or for the permanent endowment.



Progress toward financial stability was made in 1996 when a line item in the Latah County annual budget made the LCHS executive director and curator part-time employees of the County. The arrangement provided the two positions with retirement and health benefits and an added sense of security in their employment status. Both positions have since been made full-time appointments through a combination of funding from the County and from the Society. Despite the stability in their employment status, unpaid vacation time became a possibility for both the LCHS director and curator during county budget reductions made necessary in 2009 as a result of the national recession.

Prior to the recession, a serious financial concern had arisen in 2005. In the spring a newly hired Latah County deputy prosecuting attorney had come to the conclusion that the agreement between Latah County and LCHS, whereby the Society's executive director and the curator were part-time employees of the county and received retirement and health benefits, was contrary to the State of Idaho constitution. Meetings with LCHS and county officials were held to discuss alternatives to resolve the situation. Four possible options were identified, with one of the options being for the county to simply end the agreement and stop paying the salaries. The executive director and curator were held in suspense as discussions of their employment status continued over several months with little progress made toward a resolution. Would they lose their jobs? Would LCHS suddenly need to come up with full funding for the two positions? Then in January 2006 a newer deputy prosecuting attorney concluded that the current agreement was not in violation of the Idaho constitution but that documentation was needed to support it. A new agreement was drafted and ready for signatures in April 2006. A financial crisis for the Society had been averted.

### ***Partners in History***

The formation of the Latah County and City of Moscow Historic Preservation Commissions in 1991 resulted in part from the active involvement of the LCHS director and board members. Among other goals, the commissions were formed to preserve and protect buildings, sites, and areas of historic importance throughout the county for the benefit and general welfare of area residents. Plans called for the completion of an inventory of historic buildings and sites, the promotion of historic architecture, and the development of programs to inform the public about historic preservation. In September 1990 Moscow Ordinance 90-17 created a 9-member Historic Preservation Commission which initially included LCHS director Mary Reed and board member Dick Beck. By April 1991 separate Latah County and City of Moscow historic preservation commissions were holding regular meetings. At the time the fate of the Whitworth Building, now known as the 1912 Center, was up in the air. Preservation was only one of the options; demolition of the building to put up a parking lot was another. The building was eventually saved and now serves as a thriving community center and is a preferred venue for a multitude of gatherings. The citizens of Latah County continue to benefit from the commissions' activities.

Over the last decades LCHS has been joined by a number of other organizations throughout Latah County that share an interest in local history and preserving its stories and artifacts for the benefit and education of current residents and visitors and for future generations. Untold hours have been spent by dedicated volunteers to make their dreams of historic preservation come true. For example, the Juliaetta-Kendrick Foundation now occupies the restored Fraternal Temple (Grange) Building in Kendrick, with public meeting space on the ground floor and a fascinating museum and research center upstairs. The Troy Historical Society has opened the Troy Museum at 421 South Main Street in Troy. The descendants of John and Mary Lorang have worked to restore the family's original farmhouse and preserve numerous outbuildings and to organize generations of memorabilia and collections of objects at White Spring Ranch to tell the story of pioneers in Latah County. The property just north of Genesee on Highway 95 was designated a National Historic Site in 2004.

LCHS initiated plans in 2009 to identify an official historian for each city in the county. Bovill, Deary, Genesee, Potlatch, Troy, and Kendrick/Juliaetta soon signed on to the plan; LCHS was named the city historian for Moscow in 2015.

The University of Idaho department of Special Collections and Archives has been a valuable partner in helping LCHS make local history information accessible to a wide audience via digital collections. In a joint project the Society's oral history tapes and transcripts were made available online in 2015. Listeners can now hear the interviewees' own voices, and transcripts can be searched by topic, person, and other variables. In 2016 the two organizations collaborated again in "Our Hills, Our History," a community scanning event held in the 1912 Center. Participants were invited to bring in their personal and family documents, photographs, and other materials telling the stories of Latah County and its people. The items were then scanned and added to the University's digital collections available to all online. The owners could thereby keep the precious physical originals in their possession, but share the information with interested researchers.

### ***Staff and Volunteers***

Following the several changes in position titles and staff in its first years, the Society has enjoyed more long-term stability in the last three decades in the executive director and curator positions. Mary Reed retired as executive director in 2006 after 22 years of service. Joann Jones served as curator for nearly 15 years starting in 1986. Ann Catt began her career with LCHS as housekeeper and moved up from there, retiring as curator in 2013 after nearly 15 years of total service. Dan Crandall, who replaced Mary Reed as executive director in 2006, retired in 2014. Dulce Kersting-Lark was initially hired as curator to replace Ann Catt in 2013, but she was rehired as executive director to replace Dan Crandall on his retirement in 2014. Zach Wnek will mark five years as curator in 2019.

A docent program was proposed in 1990 because staff would be spending less time in the museum area as renovations on the Centennial Annex progressed and the archives and work stations were relocated to the new space. Volunteers were recruited to commit to work three hours each month greeting visitors to the McConnell Mansion, giving them an orientation to the house and processing any purchases they wished to make in the museum store. By spring 1992 there were 23 people listed in the *Latah Legacy* as volunteer docents for McConnell Mansion. As a help to docents and visitors, several versions of a small guide to the Mansion were written in leaflet form over the years, providing a brief history of the house and its inhabitants. A more comprehensive treatment of the subject, *McConnell Mansion and Its Residents*, was written by Nancy Ruth Peterson, LCHS Board President and long-time docent, in 2017.

Hardworking and highly qualified professional staff and a productive and involved board of directors have worked together over the years to bring the original vision for the Society to life. However, from the beginning, dedicated volunteers have been essential to its success. Volunteers set up and staff major events, provide maintenance and upkeep expertise, guide visitors through McConnell Mansion, contribute delicious desserts and other dishes at fundraisers, catalog collections and maintain records, and provide other services as needs arise. The Volunteer of the Year award was initiated in 1980. Engraved plaques on the wall in the office area of the Annex list each year's winners, determined annually by the curator.

Another essential key to the Society's success has been the ongoing moral support it has received from Latah County through its Board of Commissioners, in addition to the County's financial support. As a symbol of appreciation for that support, a soup and dessert luncheon with the commissioners was suggested by an events volunteer nearly ten years ago. It has been a highly anticipated annual event ever since, featuring homemade soups and desserts, a little history trivia and education, and good conversations between commissioners, Society staff and board members, and volunteers.

### **Special Milestones**

Thirty years of hard work by staff and volunteers were acknowledged and rewarded in 2000 when executive director Mary E. Reed and LCHS received an Esto Perpetua Award from the Idaho State Historical Society. The award was created by ISHS in 1999 to recognize individuals and organizations for their work in preserving and recounting the history of Idaho, whether as professionals in the field of history, volunteers or public servants, or philanthropists.

In March 2016 LCHS accepted the Sister Alfreda Award for Outstanding Service among Idaho Museums. The prize, awarded annually and valued at \$10,000, is jointly funded by the ISHS, the Idaho Heritage Trust, and the Idaho Humanities Council. A celebration was held at the



The updated fireplace in the meeting room in Centennial Annex features tiles commemorating donors to the Challenge Grant campaign of 1988. The curator and museum aide now share office space in the former meeting room. (1993)



The Esto Perpetua Award (center) received from the Idaho State Historical Society in 2000 is displayed in the Centennial Annex office, along with recognition received from the Idaho Humanities Council and the American Association for State and Local History.

Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre and included a short film, the award presentation, hors d'oeuvres and a no-host bar, trivia, and raffle prizes. The funds from the award were used to support staff continuing education, to install a new security system in the Annex, and to make repairs under the front porch of the Mansion and help fund the new roof, in compliance with the different stipulations of the three organizations for the use of the prize moneys.

A special celebration of Latah County history, "Lanterns and Luminaries: Lights along our County's Path," was held in Moscow's East City Park on September 30, 2018. The fair-like event, featuring historic displays and demonstrations, information booths, live music from the Old Time Fiddlers, and more, also celebrated 50 years of LCHS's history as an organization. Luminaria honoring individuals, families or other entities who played any part in making Latah County what it is today were sold in advance and at the celebration. A companion booklet listed the names of donors and



Presentation of the Sister Alfreda Award to the Latah County Historical Society at the Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre in Moscow: (l to r) Margo Aragon from the Idaho Humanities Council, Donna Woolston from the Idaho Heritage Trust, LCHS board president Nancy Ruth Peterson, Earl Bennett representing the Idaho State Historical Society, and LCHS executive director Dulce Kersting-Lark (2016)

those they chose to honor, along with brief descriptions of the honorees' contributions. As the sun set and the luminaria were lit, the nearly 200 memorial lanterns along the park pathways provided a golden glow in the gathering darkness and a calm atmosphere for individual reflection on the past, present, and future.

### **Looking Forward**

The Latah County Historical Society has come a long way in fifty years. It began with the gift of a house in need of a lot of renovation and restoration, a dream to preserve, protect, and display county history for future generations, and little in the way of adequate financial resources to accomplish its goals. Today the Society is on much firmer financial ground through a combination of annual support from the Latah County budget, a strong endowment fund that provides quarterly payouts, ongoing gifts and donations from members, sponsor businesses, and the community at large, and the continuous fundraising efforts of staff and volunteers. McConnell Mansion is now a house museum with restored and refurbished rooms depicting several time periods in the home's history and providing a limited amount of exhibit space and a small museum store. The Centennial Annex has been largely renovated and remodeled to house the Society's archives and object collections. There is also a research library room, and office space for the staff. One could say that much of the Society's original mission has been accomplished. What more is there to do?



"Lanterns and Luminaria" at Moscow's East City Park honored contributors to Latah County's history and celebrated 50 years of existence for the Latah County Historical Society. (2018)

As the first fifty years of the Society end and a new chapter begins, decisions will need to be made. Does the Society opt to enjoy its successes and maintain the status quo? Or does it once again dream big and work to accomplish larger goals? While it does have a house museum it can be proud of, the vast majority of its collections are largely out of sight, stored away in small rooms, cabinets, and closets in the Annex, though work is ongoing to add images of artifacts into the collections database software program for viewing on computers in the research library. Collections and archives will only grow in the future, and space is already at a premium in the Centennial Annex. A true historical museum to display the artifacts that tell the story of Latah County was the goal of the Latah County Pioneer Historical Museum Association long ago. It is a goal that has not yet been fully realized. More exciting times may be in store.

# The Elmore Church

*A history compiled by Gary E. Strong from information provided by  
Phyllis Strong, Janice Palmer and Gary E. Strong – June 2018*



Early Church and parsonage (courtesy of Keith Katzenberger and Janice Palmer)

In the 1890s the smooth, rolling hills of the rich Palouse farmlands in northern Idaho were broken occasionally by clusters of trees and farm buildings. The discovery of gold on the Clearwater River in northern Idaho late in 1860 indirectly encouraged the settlement of the rich farmlands of eastern Washington and northern Idaho. The Deep Creek valley, located less than ten miles northeast of Palouse, just over the border into Idaho, drew settlers by wagon train eventually making their living as farmers.

The town of Freeze established as a typical rural center was never large but included a store and post office in one building, a blacksmith shop, grain chopper and chop mill, school, Woodmen of the World lodge hall, community church and a few houses. The town was short lived as the post office was discontinued in 1907, the store burned about 1908 and the rest of the community soon gave in to the competition from the new town of Potlatch.

Several communities appeared at about the same time; Cora, Mountain Home, Yellow Dog, and Cedar Creek all established schools and to some degree small stores to serve the needs of their communities. But the surrounding farms and forests remained a vital part of the Latah County economy.

Settlers in Deep Creek valley soon founded other rural schools and a few churches by the 1890s. The name of Elmore was first used because of the mistaken idea that the

schoolhouse in District 78 on East Deep Creek was built on John Elmore's land. Surveys clearing off timber and fencing property later showed this building to be on Bysegger's land.

Families who homesteaded along Deep Creek bore the names of Katzenberger, Elmore, Krasselt, Bysegger, Nirk, Strong, Leistener, Gibbs, and Soncarty, among others. Since this was a "backwoods" community, the more open farming area towards Garfield had developed sooner. One such community was the Cedar Creek neighborhood near the Washington line. Some of the ministers who came occasionally to those rural areas were Methodist. Since many settlers had a Methodist background, a rural Methodist church was contemplated. Methodist officials suggested that the United Brethren Church might be better able to service the growing community.

About 1900, a church building was put up at Cedar Creek, and a congregation was organized there. Conference records date the Elmore Church as being established in 1913. Early church records record a meeting on April 22, 1916 of the Cedar Creek Circuit at the Elmore School. The circuit met again at the Elmore School house on March 3, 1917.

There was obviously a need for a church building to serve the Elmore community. Vincent and Dorothy Katzenberger recalled that the site for the church initially was west and north of John Valentine Katzenberger's private driveway to



Elmore Church and fellowship hall in 1987 (Courtesy of Cleora Strong)

his farmhouse on his Clover Hill Farm. In 1918 the church was built by the cooperation of the pastor at the time, J.O. Seibert, who was a carpenter. The problem of financial backing from the church members was creatively resolved by having each member harvest trees from their properties. The logs were brought to Frank and Guy Parnell's sawmill to cut into proper lumber for the church building. The mill was convenient to the construction site for trucking the lumber across the open field winding through the stumps.

The church was positioned east of the old highway (really more an unpaved lane) and west of Deep Creek. Access to parking on either side of the church was available. On May 10, 1919, the new "East Deep Creek Chapel" was the scene of the Quarterly Conference. With dressed siding and a coat of paint, the Elmore Church was now presentable.

Church records list parishioners from the Adams, Bysegger, Brown, Carscallen, Doty, Gibbs, Hall, Katzenberger, Krasselt, Newton, Nirk, Perkins, Shattuck, Smith, Strong, Wetzel, Widmer and Zimmerschied families as members.

Courthouse records show the filing of a deed of land along highway 95 in 1937 conveying a gift of land: J. Valentine and Myra Katzenberger, "in consideration of one dollar, (do) sell and convey unto J.V. Katzenberger, Neta Shattuck, John Bysegger, Durrell Nirk and Arthur Strong, Trustees of the property" described in the deed. The grant and sale was intended to convey the premises for the Church of the United Brethren in Christ to be held in trust by said Trustees and their successors in office for the said church.

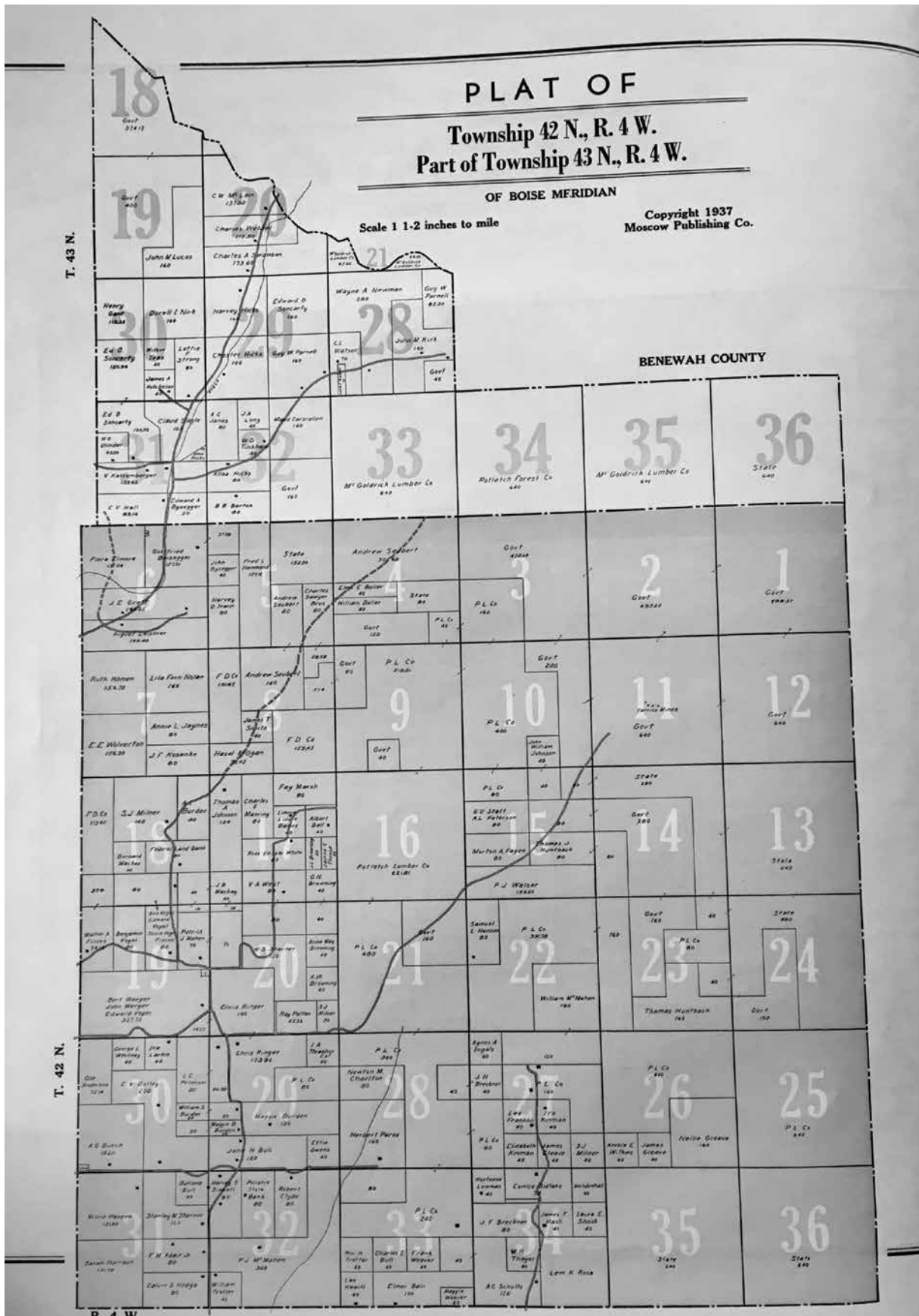
The church had been moved across the creek to its present location in December 1936, with all work being done by donated labor. Timbered hills rise to the north and west, providing a striking background to the church.

In October 1936 a parsonage was built with Clark M. Smith as pastor. Material was used in this which had been obtained from the wrecking of the Cedar Creek parsonage in the spring of 1936. The bell from the old Hutton Church at Mountain Home was brought to the building site. In 1940 various improvements were added, including a belfry and a new chimney. In 1952, a basement was poured under the parsonage with members of the congregation working well into the moonlight. In 1966 the parsonage burned to the ground and a fellowship room was then added to the church.

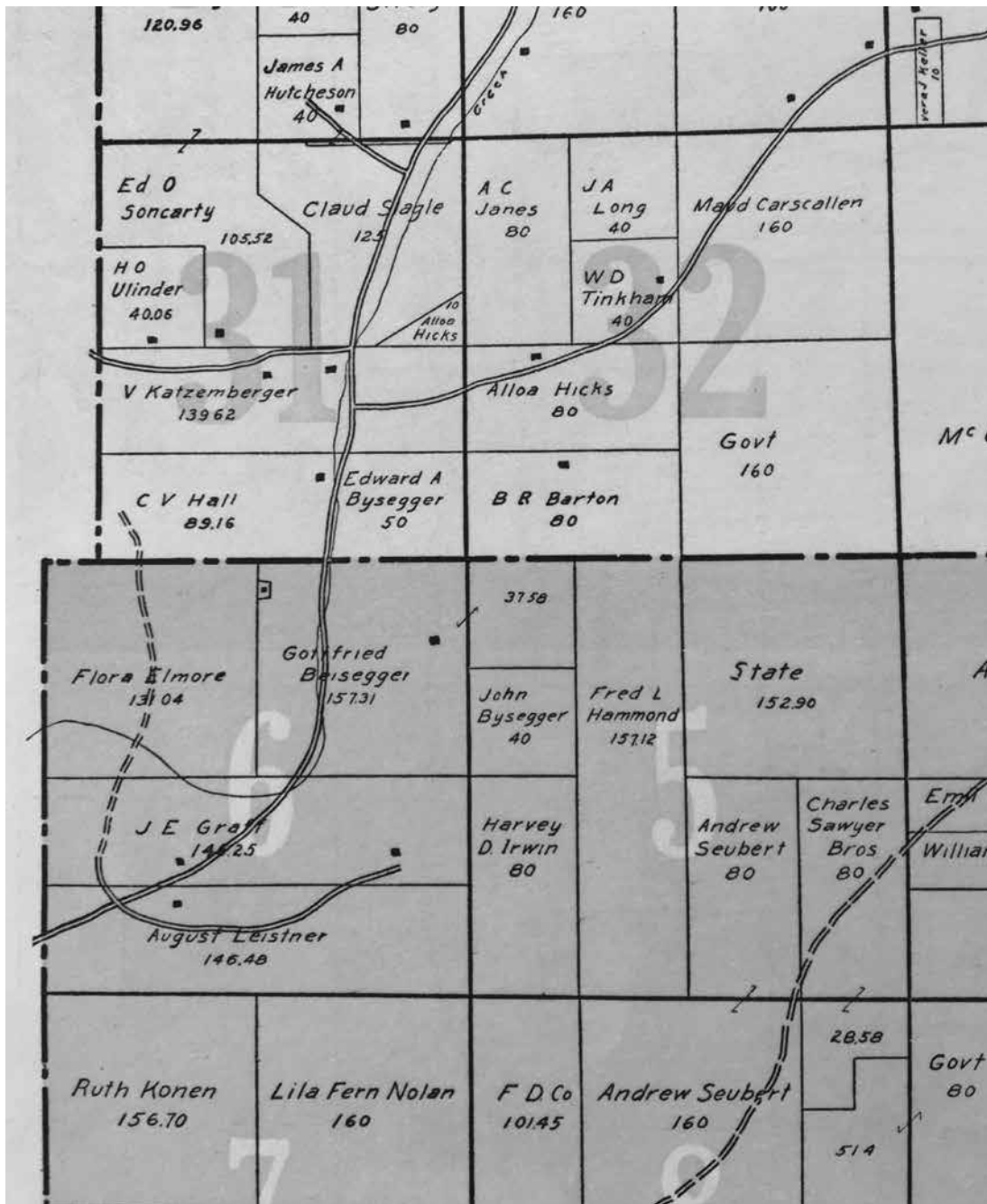
In 1968 the Evangelical United Brethren Church united with the Methodist Church to become the United Methodist Church.

In 1983 the Reardon Church loaned money to buy a mobile home parsonage. (They later forgave 2/3 of the debt.) By 1986 a well had been drilled and sidewalks were laid. Audubon Park Church in Spokane helped pay off part of the loan on the well. A roof and carport were added to the parsonage in 1989. In the summer of 1992 volunteers from the Coeur d'Alene United Methodist congregation did all of the work necessary to give the church two coats of paint.

The bell tower was re-roofed in the late 1990s. In early 2000 improvements were made to the foundation of the



The plat map from 1937 shows the ownership of lands surrounding the Elmore School and Church. The School was located on the Bysegger land and the Church was located in two locations on the land owned by Katzenberger. The logs for the first church were cut by the Parnell mill located on Claude Slagle's place and taken through the fields to the Katzenberger location. The church moved across the creek in 1936 onto land donated by Katzenberger.



Close up of plat map from previous page.

building, the kitchen was remodeled, the electrical wiring was upgraded, new carpets were laid, and the sanctuary floor refinished. A new roof was put on.

Highway 95 was widened in 2005-06 which made expansion of the parking lot necessary. (This was accomplished through long-term lease of additional land from Gary and Carolyn Strong.) At the same time, fencing and landscaping were done. In 2009 Bryan Amos, working to become an Eagle Scout, built a gazebo behind the church. In 2011 folding doors were installed between the sanctuary and the fellowship hall to help accommodate overflow crowds, new windows were installed in the church, and the patio door at the parsonage was replaced. In 2013 the parking lot railings, the lower level of the church siding and the church sign were repainted.

In 1986 Kathy Williams Kramer became the lay pastor at Elmore. She continues to serve with distinction and is called on as a leader through the entire north Latah County area, officiating at baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and comforting us all. Today Elmore is renowned for its music and community spirit, bringing folks together for Easter sunrise service and Christmas programs.

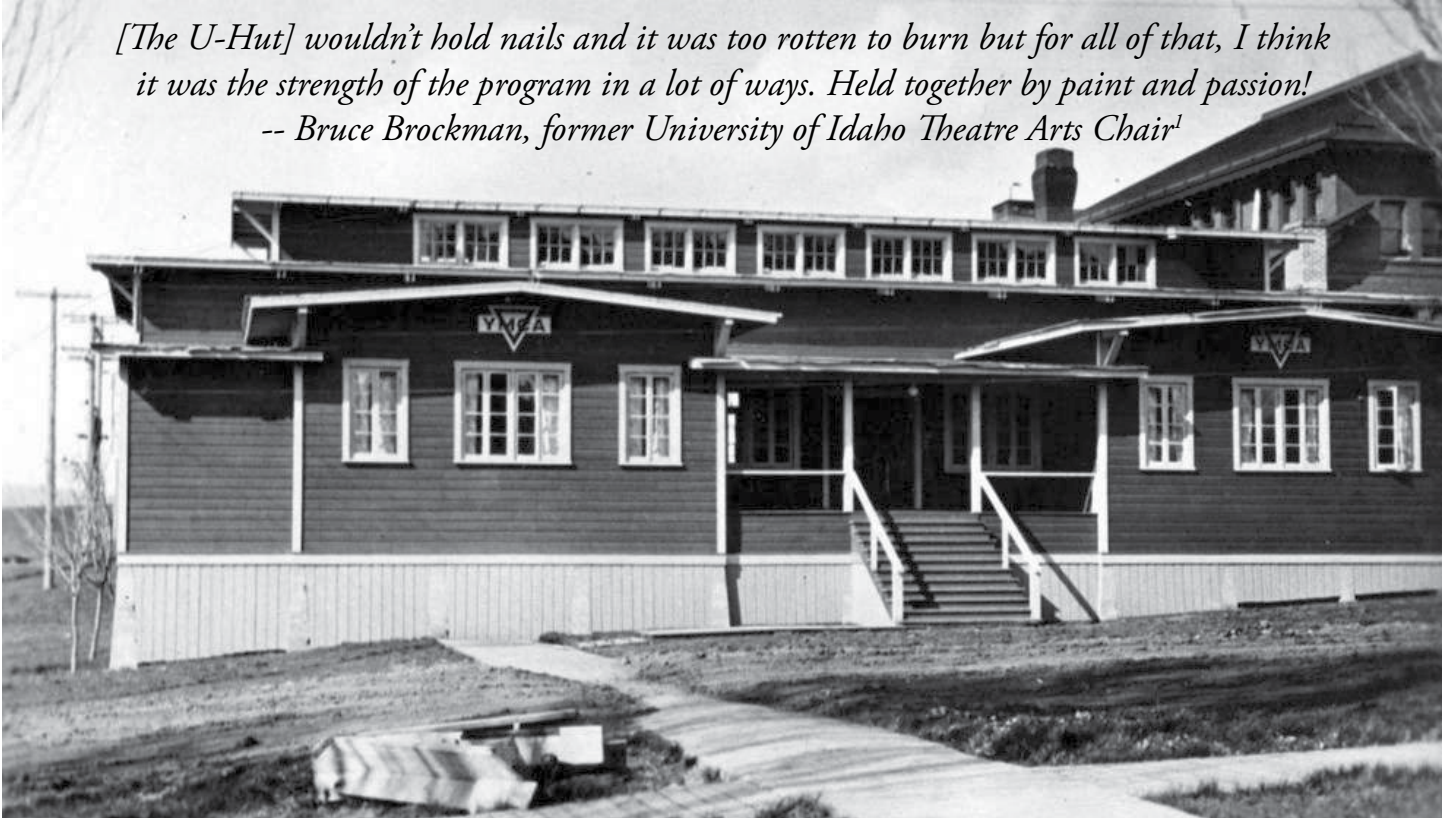
While there were never commercial enterprises located at Elmore, the church has flourished through good and challenging times, remaining an important community gathering place. So it is appropriate to consecrate this hallowed ground on the anniversary of its 100th year.

# Held Together By Paint and Passion!

## *A Retrospective of the University of Idaho's University Hut*

*By Ariana Burns and Dusty Fleener  
Palouse Anthropology*

*[The U-Hut] wouldn't hold nails and it was too rotten to burn but for all of that, I think it was the strength of the program in a lot of ways. Held together by paint and passion!*  
*-- Bruce Brockman, former University of Idaho Theatre Arts Chair<sup>1</sup>*



U-hut when it was still the Y-Hut, ca. 1919 (UISPEC PG\_90-08-069)

In the late 1980s the University of Idaho's University Hut (U-Hut) was one of the few remaining stick buildings on the campus. It occupied a much coveted piece of real estate in the campus core and was rumored to be a retired USO building from either Farragut Naval Station outside of Athol, Idaho or one of the military bases in Spokane, Washington. Back then the olive drab and green paints were peeling off. It had no exterior lighting to speak of, was hot in the summer, freezing in the winter, and dripping when wet outside. Theatre students joked that the University hated the little building and only grudgingly did the minimum of maintenance required.

Environmental hardships once led the students to hold a sit-in at Bruce Pitman's Dean of Students Office, demanding that the heat be turned on. Requests from the theatre students to the University's facilities department had been refused, but after Pitman called that office the building was restored to a habitable state.

The U-Hut was different from other campus buildings, exuding a congenial feel that the Student Union Building (SUB—now the Bruce Pitman Center), the Satellite SUB (now the Interior Design Building), or its successor the Idaho Commons never successfully recreated. Like most of my theatre classmates, I spent the majority of my time studying, crewing shows, and even sleeping on the comfy, banged-up couches in the green room—a room which always seemed to be occupied. I thought of the U-Hut as home. Once inside I felt I belonged, at ease, and excited for whatever I was working on no matter how exhausted I might be from school and projects.<sup>2</sup>

What follows is an introduction to the University Hut. The multitude of uses that were found for the building over time is a testament to the “can-do” attitude that caused its creation.

Constructed by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in 1919, the YMCA Hut, or Y-Hut, was built as a gathering place and it never surrendered that role.





Military science cadets on the lawn of the Administration Building, the U-Hut in back center, 1922. (UISPEC PG1\_208-025)

The YMCA had already had a presence on campus. That presence increased after the United States entered World War I and President Woodrow Wilson created the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) in 1918.<sup>3</sup> “[SATC utilized] educational institutions to assist in... the training of officer-candidates and technical experts of all kinds....”<sup>4</sup> Rafe Gibbs remarked in his book, *Beacon for Mountain and Plain: Story of the University of Idaho*, that by joining the SATC program universities became akin to military bases.<sup>5</sup> Martial education was not unfamiliar curriculum at the University of Idaho. It was a required subject for land-grant institutions, thus the U of I was already involved in military training.<sup>6</sup>

During World War I, the YMCA erected buildings on both the war and home fronts. The YMCA Huts served as a base of operations and “provided a home, school, club, stage, church—the center of social life for the military men” to help with morale.<sup>7,8</sup>

After the University of Idaho joined the SATC program, the YMCA prepared to meet the incoming students-soldiers’ needs. Near the end of September, F.A. Jackson of the YMCA’s National War Work Council wrote to U of I’s President Ernest H. Lindley to inquire about the number of student-soldiers coming and if room was available for the

YMCA’s “war work or whether in your judgment a special building will need to be provided.”<sup>9</sup>

President Lindley replied that the University was pressed to find housing for the anticipated 1000 plus SATC men. They were being placed in fraternities and campus buildings; also the trainees had built their own mess hall.<sup>7</sup> Lindley wrote:

We are counting on assistance from the Y.M.C.A. We shall probably need a special building in as much as we are now under obligation to provide for the large number of students with temporary constructions. We shall appreciate whatever the National War Council may be able to do in helping us deal with the important problem of student life, and recreation under the unique conditions that now prevail.<sup>10</sup>

In October, Lindley wrote Gale Seamon of the YMCA War Work Committee:

To one unacquainted with conditions here, the ... request for two secretaries and for a hut may seem a large demand... [but] we are called upon as never before to serve not only the people of Idaho but students from Wyoming, a contingent of 100 of whom arrived today.<sup>11</sup>



Jean Collette, U of I alumna, dramatics teacher, and theatre department chair, 1946 (UISPEC Ott-Hodgins Collection 92-1746)

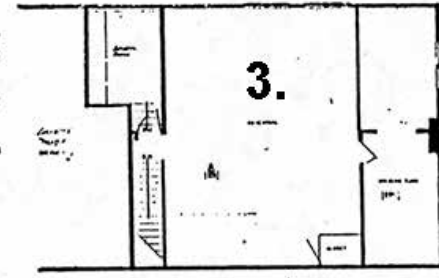
The University of Idaho convened a newly created YMCA Advisory Board on November 1, 1918 which sent a series of recommendations to President Lindley. The Board encouraged the acceptance of the YMCA's offer of a social service building for the SATC; that the building be constructed across the street from the Administration Building's north lawn; and that the University would furnish heat, light, water, and provide a sewer connection as well as labor for its construction.<sup>12</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the Y-Hut plans were approved and sent out for bid. The University paper, the *Argonaut*, reported in delightful tones: "At last it is certain that the University of Idaho is to have a Y.M.C.A. building, or a 'hut' as the 'Y' building is commonly known to our boys 'over there.'" <sup>13</sup> It continued that the hut would be a "permanent and...integral part of the University."<sup>14</sup>

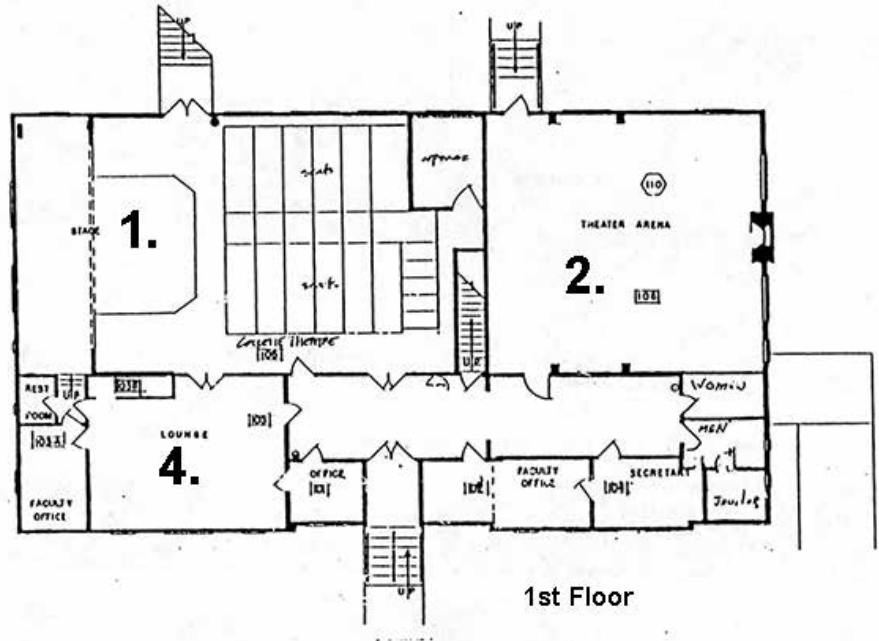
The one-and-a-half story bungalow-styled building would have a 250-seat auditorium, movie equipment, classrooms, billiard room, and an office for the YMCA secretary. Its proximity to the athletic field would avail it for use by visiting sports teams. The *Argonaut* reported that "[i]t will supply a lounging place—a 'commons' [their emphasis] so much needed by the men of the University."<sup>13</sup> It was expected to cost \$9000 (approximately \$131,000 today).<sup>15</sup> "The War Work Council [was] ready to proceed immediately on the construction of the building."<sup>13</sup>

Finding original plans for the U of I's Y-Hut has proved challenging and at the time of this writing the search

1. Jean Collette Theatre
2. Arena Theatre
3. Design Loft
4. Green Room



2nd Floor



1st Floor

U-Hut floor plan showing location of theatres, loft, and green room (Adapted by Burns from UI Theatre Arts Department archives)

continues. The University of Idaho has few surviving Y-Hut blueprints. Those still extant are incomplete and only detail renovations of the facility. The earliest plan so far located was a 1963 remodel. Only one of its two pages remains. Wendy McClure, U of I architecture professor emeritus, reviewed the available plans for Palouse Anthropology. In 1963 the building rafters were reinforced and a low ceiling installed—the ceiling would not meet today's building code. Along with other updates, concrete piers were added to the outside walls.<sup>16</sup>

Despite an eagerness in 1918 to begin, construction was obliged to wait. The influenza pandemic that ravaged the globe was also felt in Moscow. Both the town and the campus were under quarantine to control the spread of the disease and so work was delayed until the quarantine was lifted.<sup>14</sup>

The pandemic was not the only item of note that crowded the November 13 issue of the *Argonaut*. While it reported the approval to build the Y-Hut, it also boasted a front-page announcement that the Armistice had been signed.<sup>13</sup>



Art studio upstairs in the U-Hut, 1942 (UISPEC PG1\_241-29)

News of a cease fire brought the future of the SATC into question and with it the fate of the Y-Hut. An undated report from the University's YMCA Advisory Committee stressed the need for the building.<sup>17</sup>

In December, it was decided that SATC men would be discharged.<sup>18</sup> Another week would pass before the *Argonaut* reported that the YMCA War Work Council had decided to keep their program running at the University. The Y-Hut could be completed.<sup>19</sup>

Long-awaited construction proceeded at a rapid pace and the Y-Hut was dedicated on the afternoon of February 9, 1919.<sup>20</sup> Within the dedication ceremony's program was a solemn announcement:

This building, which was started under war conditions, has been completed by the National War Work Council of the Young Men's Christian Association in view of the fact that the period of reconstruction may in course of time be recognized as of greater importance than the period of the war itself.<sup>21</sup>

The dedication received a benediction and addresses by President Lindley and other representatives of the campus community. Hymns were sung by the audience who were in turn treated to vocal performances.<sup>21</sup>

With its small auditorium, the Y-Hut was a natural performance facility and twelve days later the English Club presented two comedies there, *Pipe of Peace* and *Best Man*. The "YMCA Hut will be initiated into university life Friday night...The performance [sic], which will be held immediately after the Oregon game, is open to the public and free."<sup>27</sup> From the first, the Y-Hut was used to stage plays

and its history would be entwined with the burgeoning dramatics unit.

In that first year of existence the Y-Hut had a lunch room, an auditorium, and classrooms.<sup>22</sup> Plays, lectures, club meetings, church services, art exhibits, boxing, and chess clubs were among the activities that occurred there over the years. Theatre faculty member David Lee-Painter remarked in an interview that even near the end of its life, the "building was alive 18 hours a day. Some rehearsing, working on design projects."<sup>23</sup>

A 1919 op-ed in the *Argonaut* claimed that: "The foremost purpose of the 'Y' hut is to bring together the men of the University and thereby create a more democratic-spirit."<sup>24</sup> A lunch counter was installed, and the building was repainted that summer.<sup>25</sup> The YMCA added a candy store in 1920 and the University's *Gem of the Mountains* yearbook staff moved in as well.<sup>26</sup> The following year the *Argonaut* revealed that a canteen was there, a fact known only to "the band boys and the girls who have hygiene classes in the Y-Hut."<sup>27</sup>

In 1921 President A.H. Upham addressed the faculty and, amongst other items, informed them of an agreement with the YMCA in the northwest. The Y-Hut was university property and would be cared for and used by the University. Going forward it would now be called the University Hut.<sup>28</sup>

After the University took full possession, the auditorium was redone in 1923 transforming it into a laboratory theater for the English department's dramatic courses and the Varsity Players, the campus theatre group. With this



Francis Newton paints a fresco in the U-Hut art studio, 1936 (UISPEC PG1\_241-22b)

new space and an expanded dramatics program, students had space to write and produce their own scripts.<sup>29</sup>

President Upham declared that it was “the theatre for those who care.” In an article for the University magazine *The Blue Bucket*, John Cushman, dramatics head, wrote about the remodel. A deep stage was built which was well-suited for technically uncomplicated shows. Soft grey drapes served as background drops.<sup>30</sup> The seating was expanded to 350 people.<sup>31</sup> Without photographs or blueprints, this is difficult to imagine. In the late 1980s, the theatre seated 80 people, so it is daunting to envision 250 people tightly packed into the room.

By 1923 the *Argonaut* and the Associated Students of the University of Idaho (ASUI) had offices there.<sup>32</sup> This use was soon followed by a used bookstore. A freshman hoped the profits would help pay for the rest of his school year.<sup>33</sup> That same year, 1925, ASUI and the religious secretary moved out of the building to provide office space for Dramatics.<sup>34</sup>

The U-Hut would see several remodels over its 82 years. Fred Blanchard was dramatics director when an intimate theatre with proscenium arch was built. He was assisted by Theodore Prichard, an art instructor who later became head of the College of Art and Architecture. Prichard is also the namesake of the art gallery in downtown Moscow.<sup>35,36</sup>

In 1926 a post office substation went into the northern part of the U-Hut building.<sup>37</sup> This would put it about where the 1980s studio theatre was. There is no indication if it was a shared space or if performances were done in the east room (the Arena Theatre) displaced from the studio theatre. One of the substation postal workers was Ione “Pinkie” Adair, a well-known local figure. More information on Pinkie is



Two of the frescos removed from the U-Hut and displayed in the Idaho Commons (Photo by Burns)

available at the Latah County Historical Society.

Dramatics also made attempts to escape the U-Hut. Blanchard penned a 1935 letter to University President M.G. Neale. There was talk of a new infirmary and he was interested in one or both of the old hospital buildings. He felt they could easily be remodeled for dramatics.

I believe you are aware of our present cramped and inadequate quarters. Such a move, if possible, would also solve the space problem for the Art Department and the University store by releasing the rooms now occupied by my small office, the stage, and the dramatics classroom.<sup>38</sup>

As history shows, Dramatics did not move, and the old infirmary was converted to a dormitory.<sup>39</sup>

The University Hut had its basement enlarged in 1936 and housed the university storeroom, the student post office, part of the Art Department, and an office space for the Department of Buildings and Grounds.<sup>40</sup>

The Art Department had a studio on the second floor. Up there long-time art professor Mary Kirkwood taught graduate students 15th century fresco painting techniques. The students painted onto the studio walls using a wet plaster process. “When the plaster sets, the painting is incorporated in its substance....” becoming part of the wall.<sup>41</sup> The students were also paid under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) project, a Depression Era relief program.<sup>42</sup>

The U-Hut saw its overpopulation difficulties ease when the new library was completed in 1957 and the student post office moved there.<sup>43</sup> By 1966 the building was solely in the hands of theatre arts.<sup>23</sup> The bittersweet privilege of being lone

occupants would endure until the University Hut's final years as Lee-Painter reflected:

I really loved it. I loved that building. I loved that we owned it. That it was ours. And people would leave us alone because it was such a dilapidated...looking place. But great theatre in there.<sup>44</sup>

The U-Hut's studio theatre was remodeled once more in the early 1970s. A thrust stage was designed by Gary C. Schattschneider. Equipment was updated, and a control room was built. The Kenworthy Theatre, located on Main Street in downtown Moscow, donated audience seats. Costing under \$500, the remodel was paid for entirely by the Theatre Department. Students did most of the labor. "I have yet to see finer educational theatre anywhere than here at the University of Idaho," Theatre Department Chair Fred Chapman declared.<sup>45,46</sup>

A new theatre building was a topic of conversation over the years. It would be built for theatrical productions. Theatre buildings were designed by art students and design professionals, but all plans fell to the way side. The 1970s recession forced the development of the Performing Arts Centre (now the Hartung Theatre) to be revised from multiple performance spaces, faculty offices, and classrooms to the single theater which stands today.<sup>47</sup>

In 1979 the U-Hut Studio Theatre was renamed in memory of Jean Collette who was "fondly remembered by staff, alumni and students." Collette was a U of I alumna who returned in 1933 to teach dramatics and after a few years assumed leadership of the department.<sup>48</sup> She remained chair until her retirement 30 years later. In an interview with the *Idaho State Journal*, Collette described the University Hut as "a prize of war."<sup>49</sup> She provided much of the energy that shaped the University of Idaho's Theatre Department.<sup>50</sup>

The first Jean Collette Theatre show was *From To To From*, a children's play and the first original work in many years. It was directed by graduate student Vicki Blake, and local community player Alvin Berg was in the cast.<sup>51</sup>

A noteworthy production at the Jean Collette Theatre was produced in 1981. *Homestead Act* was a collaboration between a local writer and the Latah County Historical Society. Compiled by Rob Moore, it used over 600 hours of interviews in the LCHS Oral History Project.<sup>52</sup> (These interviews are available for download at the University of Idaho Special Collections and Archives.)

That year also saw another attempt for a new theatre building. Project architect Eve Magyar wrote a proposal for a classroom addition to the Hartung. She noted the aging condition of the U-Hut:

...its overall structural quality [w]as poor...major handicapped violations, major life safety violations, extreme energy consumer and a major maintenance problem. The recommendation of the Division of Public Works is that



Exterior of the U-Hut, 1998. The sign under the window displayed upcoming productions. (Gem of the Mountains 1998)

the 'building needs to be replaced with a safe, economical structure of a more permanent nature in three to five years' [sic]. In addition to the physical problems associated with the U-Hut, it now occupies a prime building location in the center of the academic core of the campus. ....These problems, the present location of the Department of Theatre Arts in the U-Hut, the U-Hut's physical condition and the desire of the University to locate another building on the U-Hut's site, are all critical [sic] factors in the decision to relocate the classroom office portion of the Department of Theatre Arts.<sup>53</sup>

This proposed addition was never constructed. Instead more updates were done to the University Hut. In 1986 bathrooms became more accessible, though the entrance stairs would still be a challenge. Other surviving blueprints demonstrated that maintenance was done on the building until at least 1995.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, it was announced that the U-Hut was coming down. Theatre would be moved out in 1998. Construction was beginning on the Idaho Commons. Lee-Painter recalled:

Well the U-Hut was at the end of its life. Because—the story I know, it was condemned in 1981. And then, finally, . . . you know, they wouldn't let us paint it. Wouldn't let us do anything to it because it was going to be torn down.<sup>44</sup>

The last show on the Collette stage would be *Orchards*. The cast included long-time community actor Alvin Berg, who had unintentionally book-ended the Collette Theatre's existence.

The local papers ran articles to capture the passage of the long-lived building, interviewing actors and faculty. "It's a special space and there's a certain sadness in its passing," noted Forrest Sears, theatre professor emeritus. Student Cate Olson remarked that the U-Hut had been "in the same spot for 80 years and the school has been built around it."<sup>54</sup>

Another disappointment came with the announcement that the WPA frescos would not be saved. The facilities department had determined that \$30,000 was too costly to try to salvage the art that was part of the building. U of I Art alumna Marie Whitesel began looking for alternatives. David Giese, art professor emeritus who worked with plaster and wall art, felt the frescos could be saved for less money. With the help of students to remove the art from the University Hut, he cleaned and stabilized the four frescos by casting them in a non-toxic foam.<sup>55</sup> They are now on display in the Idaho Commons, close to their original home.

The U-Hut became the Idaho Commons construction headquarters and then was demolished.<sup>56</sup> Lee-Painter was there for the last performance and planned to attend the demolition. "It'll be like a symbolic passing of the torch," he said. "Watching the old make way for the new."<sup>55</sup>

*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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