

LATAH COUNTY MUSEUM SOCIETY

McConnell Mansion 110 South Adams Moscow, Idaho

Quarterly Bulletin
Kenneth B. Platt, Editor

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Mary McConnell Borah, 1870-1975

With the death of Mary McConnell Borah on January 14, the Latah County Museum Society has lost a beloved member. She was the widow of Senator William E. Borah and the last surviving child of the builder of the McConnell Mansion. A witty, gracious woman, she shared the thirty-three years of her husband's life in Washington, D. C., never losing her affection for her home state and its people. She is survived by four great-nephews and -nieces, one of whom has kindly written about her for the Quarterly Bulletin.

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I was asked to write a brief reminiscence of my aunt, Mary Borah, or Little Borah, as she was called in Washington. My brother, and my cousins and I, called her Aunt Mamie.

She had many stories to tell. One of my favorite was about a family dinner she had with President and Mrs. Coolidge. My uncle was away on a speaking trip. The Coolidges knew she was alone, and invited her to share dinner with them in the family dining room in the White House. During dinner the president's dog, Rob Roy, wandered around the table looking hungry. Aunt Mamie, who thought no one would notice, slipped him a piece of meat.

But the president had seen. He said, "He's your friend now, but wait until the coffee comes."

When the coffee was served the president poured some of his into his saucer and put it on the floor. Rob Roy lapped it up with obvious pleasure, his tail wagging.

At another White House dinner, a large, formal one given by the Franklin Roosevelts, Aunt Mamie was seated by the president. She said, "Mr. President, I don't know what we'll talk about. My husband gave me orders not to mention politics to you."

They talked about other things and when the dinner was almost over the president called down the table in a loud voice to her husband, who was seated at the far end of the table, "Borah, your wife and I have talked politics all evening long."

Sometimes when Aunt Mamie was in a group of people and thought the conversation was getting a bit dull, she used to tell slightly off-color jokes. If everyone laughed, as they usually did, she looked very innocent and said, "Was that funny? I guess I didn't get the point."

--Mary Louise Perrine

What Price, Bicentennial

As we begin 1976, observances celebrating our national Bicentennial year are the order of the day. The Society already has introduced this theme in presenting to school and adult groups around the county a sound-taped and photo-illustrated program of local pioneer recollections and experiences. There is indeed much to celebrate in the national record of the last 200 years, and Latah County's 100-year share of this historic period embraces a rich cross section of both the pioneer beginnings and the vast progress which the Bicentennial is intended to commemorate.

How to convey the realities of the past to people whose only direct experience is the present and whose dominant interest necessarily is the future, is a special challenge in realizing the commemorative purpose. That purpose is to honor the deeds of the past that have made the present possible. But the present too easily is taken without thought of how it came into being. The past too easily is romanticized into rosy unreality.

In this day of crowded living, neon scenery, trashed environment, and impersonal technology, who has not yearned for a way to step back into the calmer, cleaner past? Oh, for the good old days, when the land was new and man still could live in free harmony with nature! Those days of country living! Then neighbor helped neighbor, daily life was not hectic, simple honesty prevailed, and . . .

But wait! Before we go all the way back to the prairie sod, let's take a look at pioneer life in 1890 as seen by a farm wife doing her idyllic bit in the setting of an actual homestead at Southwick, Idaho. The following letter of November 17, 1890, from Mrs. Benjamin F. Jacks to her son James tells its own unpretentious story.

A Letter from Home

"Dear Son I will try to answer your letter. I intended to answer yesterday but had company and could not we recieved your letter several days ago, but Pearlle is oh dear so cross and requiers so mutch care, tho she is better, in fact she seems like one from the grave, she has bin so near there. She has had too spells that I thought she would never breath any more one time I enserted my finger in her mouth to try to get the phlegm out of her throat, and her jaws set and she set her teeth on my finger, I was sure she was gon. I screamed oh Pearlle are you dead and my finger fast in your mouth, and just then I gave my finger a twist, and that loosened her jaws anuff that I thrused my finger as far down her throat as my finger would reach and oh dear the phlegm blood and corruption, did come.

"That was just a week after the time that I wrout you about. I tell you my finger did hert she had it fast right threw the first joint and it swelled as tight and hard she mad impration anuff that she reached blood. Orrin has bin very bad he coughs so heard and his lings bleeds every on that have seen them say that they never saw any worse. Essie keeps up she coughfes heard but not like the other too.

"I have bin confined in the house so long and so clost,

and yesterday Jess went for medicen and of coors your Pa had to go to meeting, and I had to run out too or three times to set the dogs on the stock to keep them where we wanted them to stay, and I took a dreadfull cold, my head and ches, and I feel real badley but will get all right as soon as my cold gets ripe anuff to pick. I tell you, we have a fine doggie he couldnot be bough today with ten dollars. Yesterday the cow was a quarter of a mild north of the house, and I called the dogs they came to me I said Bess, Prince, look see that cow they looked at me I said take her. Away they went. I stood in the dore-yard, and wished Jim could see the way that dog run. Bess let Prince lead out, but the cow come a bobbing you bet. He would bigh her heels and purk her tail once in a while he would run to her head to turn her. Oh we love our dogies. Mrs. Rice was hear, and they have a brother to Prince. She says he is one of the smartest dogs, and that they would-not take ten dollars for him.

"When Perlie was so bad choked and the children was crying bess seemed to know that sompthing was wrong with her, for she sat back on her honches, and oh dear how she howled. That made us all have a more tender feeling for her she watches her chance and comes in and licks Pearlies hands and will give her a lick in the face to. Well we will tell you lots of Bessies pranks when you come home.

"I was seting one day, seting back from the door. I looked at her just kept lookind at her didnot say a word nor make a motion. She looked as solm. A casionally she would twitch he lip just a little I looked at her and frowned. She showed signs of fear or sompthing for her eyes would look sad. I sat there just experimenting, finley I canenced to look pleased her ears comenced to twitch and trin and I sill eyed her and she eyed me, and as I alowed myself to look more pleased she took on as it seamed the same feeling finly I just chuckeled to myself. It realy seamed so funy that I had to laugh hear she came whinis and frisking, and she wasnot content untill she sat her fore paws on my lap and wanted to kiss me but I said that will do bessie get down, you are a smart dog.

"Well Jimie we have writen and found out that there will be nothing dun about the school land untill after the Legeslature next January that will give us all a better chance. Why not come and work in the Lueston Teller office it is a good Republican paper, double sheet and a fine paper. I wish you would get nearer home Moscow runs a good paper, and so does Knedricks. The R. R. is at work and say that the wistle will blow in Kendricks this fall or forepart of winter.

"Cannot tell sure just when we will thrash this week. Your Pa has gon for a tank of water he holls water about three milds. Old Mrs. Hartenges has a new well 39 feet of water, dont you think she is glad, Charlie Black has a boy kid John Huett has bough Albert Huetts farm and has moved up. Henrie Jacks has lost old dexter didnt know that there was any thing wrong, went to take off his bridle and found his jaws locked. he lived about aleven hours and died he has lost a nice colt and a good cow all clost together Mary and all the children have the whooping cough

"Mary Branderberg is very sick she is in a sad fix she had worked heard and got a big flock of fullblooded brown lagnhorn chickens and some one stold all of them one night and she cryed so mutch about that, and she works awfull hard, and she works oh so hard, and she has bin very porley all the summer, and she has a young baby about 3 months old and she is so anxious for money and over worked her self, when she ough to rested all things together has about unnerved her mind and boddley to. Her recovery is doubtfull she has not her right mind a part of the time but she new your pa when he was there last week

"well we are going to kill a hog this evening, and I will have to help to get the water hot Come over for brakfast and eat rosted ribb! Well Jimie it just seems as I am never to get this letter finished Monday night after we got threw butchering, Frank Ferington, a 'wood rat,' came and put up for the night and C. Landing and Jack Sotherland came to see us I think that they ware real kind to take the trouble to come so fare Charley tole Pearl that he came to see her

"Your pa has gon to Fairview with wood. Jess has gon to the post office, and Pearl and Essie and Orrin is trying to see wich can bother me most Pearl is oh so cross, if you could hear her just now, oh dear, she is so spoilt. We got a letter from Allie Monday they was all well well I have comenced to cook grub for the thrashers. I have a pot of pumpkin cooking. I am going to give them pumpkin pies Oh well I will have to quit for Pearl is yelling and Orrin is coughing and vomiting dear dear it is awfull, but I feel like that they are so much better that I feel like singing a long meter doxology prais god from whome all blessing flow god bye must get supper, your mother in hope of seeing her absent boy soon,

Mary M. Jacks"

(The above letter was obtained from the Rural Women's History Project, University of Idaho, and is printed here by permission of Mr. Frank O. Jacks, Clarkston, Wash., who supplied it to the RWHP. No changes have been made in capitalization or spelling, but spacings have been adjusted to facilitate reading. The Bulletin hereby extends its appreciation to both Mr. Jacks and the RWHP.)

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When Mrs. Jacks' letter was written, the railroad already had been serving Moscow for 5 years, and many Latah County homesteaders had used it to get that far. A great many others, however, came before the railroad, trekking the wearisome overland routes to the gold fields or to fabled Oregon, then to new lures in Idaho. The tidal proportions of those movements, their greater distance in years, the subsequent dwarfing of the continent by modern transportation, and again the aura of romanticism have dimmed our view of reality about those earlier comers. We need another look at actual experience to correct the focus. Andrietta Applegate Hixon of Weiser, Idaho, has recorded such an experience in her "True Story of a Young Girl's Journey into the West." Although not written until 1928, Mrs. Hixon's account actually relates the experiences of her mother as a 9-year-old girl crossing the Oregon Trail in 1852, and as told and retold into indelible memory:

On to Oregon

"My name was Mary Ellen Todd," her story begins, "and you know the wife of Abraham Lincoln was a Todd. She was first cousin to my father. But first I must tell you how we happened to leave Indiana to go to Arkansas. I guess you never had an ague chill, did you? Well, we did in Indiana. . . . First our bones would begin to ache; then we would get cold and colder, and feel weak and weaker, until we finally had to go to bed, where we would shake and shake until our teeth would chatter and even the slats on our bed would rattle. . . . When some of our relatives from Arkansas wrote that they didn't have the ague very much there, we decided to go.

"After we decided to go to Oregon we found there were many things to be thought about and done to prepare for such a journey. We learned that there was to be a great emigration westward during the spring of 1852, and reasoned that following in the rear of all that moving mass would mean very little grass for our stock. As everything depended upon the condition of our stock as to whether we should get through to Oregon, we decided to start about the first of April.

"It was not many days until the new white canvas cover was stretched over the bows on top of our wagon, and they began packing the lower section. The deep bed had sideboards, making it near four feet in depth, so they made a sort of two-story affair of it. There were all sorts of things: flour, corn meal, sugar, dried fruit, sorghum molasses, butter, lard . . . bacon and hams, some vegetables, home-make soap, stock salt, rosin and tar, medicine for both man and beast, extra bedding and clothing, and other equipment.

"As the time drew nearer, excitement increased; I fairly seemed to fly from place to place. . . . One evening the tar bucket for greasing the wheels was hung beneath the wagon, and we were all ready to go on the morrow. I could hardly sleep that night. . . . Morning came at last. Breakfast was soon over. . . . The oxen were all yoked up, one horse saddled, and the last things put into the wagon; still we lingered.

"The group of dear ones were all standing about, some

were crying, and one said, 'I know you will all be killed and we shall never see you again.' They went from one of us to another, sobbing words of endearment and advice.

"As we climbed inside the wagon, under that clean white cover, father, looking sad and pale, was standing on the near side of his team, his big whip in hand; mother was softly crying, Louvina and Cynthia looking scared Finally father popped his whip, shouting, 'Gee, Buck!' Slowly the oxen turned toward the road; then the wheels began turning and we were moving toward Oregon.

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"We were traveling along the border of Kansas in a northerly direction, and as we moved on day after day we were often told that after we reached the wild prairies ahead of us it would not be safe to travel alone. So when we came to Independence we decided to stay until an emigrant train was made up. . . . Finally a train of one hundred wagons was made up, and we were ready to move on.

"When we came to the little Wakarusa river the waters had been so high that the miry banks at either side of the bridge could not be crossed, so we had to lay over several days to make a corduroy bridge, placing poles and brush over the mud, on which our train might pass. . . . During this time another emigrant train came and made camp some distance above us. They never offered to help with the bridge making, but the morning we were ready to cross we looked, and behold, that other train was coming around the bend of the river making direct for our crossing! 'Hurry up! Hurry up!' was the cry on all sides. Children, women and baggage soon were hustled into the wagons. This was father's day to drive in the lead. Our oxen started and soon were going at a gallop. Father was hanging onto the horns of the lead ox and running for dear life. . . . All along the line there were dogs barking, men and boys yelling, whips popping, and the rumble of all those heavy wagons was like thunder, we held our breath in suspense. . . .

"If only we could get started onto the bridge first we would be the victors! The other train was also very near. More cries and blows were rained on our team,

and they bounded ahead and were just in the act of going onto the bridge when a horseman from the other train sprang in front of them. . . . Instantly my gentle father, who was never known to lift his voice while correcting a child, with his big whip struck the man and beast such a blow as to cause them to wheel and flee away, and we had won! John threw up his hat and shouted 'Hurrah for our train.' Others along the line followed suit, until the cheering was deafening. The other train could now do nothing but wait and watch.

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"After crossing the Wakarusa you should have seen our mud spattered men, oxen and wagon covers. But as we moved along, the Kansas wind soon dried all that mud; yes, right on them. . . . We had now come about 400 miles, which had taken us nearly six weeks. I could not realize that we still had almost 2,000 miles ahead of us, as it seemed to me that we must surely be nearing Oregon."

"The first night after we had crossed, it began to rain and almost poured for three or four days. Hence all those wagons had to lay by in camp. Most of the women kept rather closely in their tents or wagons, but men folks just had to get out and see to the stock, milk the cows, get wood, try to make fires. . . . When the rains ceased and the muddy roads would permit, most of us were ready to start on, but some turned back. To them the hardships, with all those reports of dangers ahead, seemed too great. . . .

"It was a cold, windy evening when we drew up on the banks of the Kaw river. I stood in awe, for it seemed as an ocean of swift muddy water. It seemed impossible to me that we could ever cross. There were many other emigrants camped up and down the banks. Such a mixture of cows, calves, dogs and chickens had never met my eyes! There were crying children, scolding mothers and swearing fathers. But as we moved on out to a camping place we saw other children laughing, and mothers and fathers going quietly about their duties.

"We soon found that there was great discouragement among the emigrants, and every day some were going back. There were many discussions among the people of our train. They had heard more about the impending dangers ahead; then this crossing, where stock and men had been drowned.

No wonder that stout hearts had begun to waver. In the end, out of all those 100 wagons starting out from Independence, all but four turned back. With saddened hearts we watched the departure of each wagon. . . .

"There was an old ferryboat, but it was not considered safe, so we decided to wait until we could cross. The river was going down rapidly. By the time it was considered low enough to cross, we were ready. . . . Each family had come prepared with a strong long rope and chains for such occasions. A man took the end of a long rope and rode his swimming horse across to the other side. There he made it fast to a tree. The other end was attached to the wagon-bed boat, which also had another rope in like manner at its rear. Father told us to get in as they would need to come back for the rest of the load later. So we all got in. Father and John began paddling out into the river. It seemed that we were floating right down the river, but the man on the bank kept tightening the rope, until we began to swing toward the shore. Soon our craft was made fast. We then got out and unloaded; we had conquered another obstacle.

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"After our little train of four families had crossed the Kaw our wagons had to be gotten together and repacked. We all helped, and were ready to start next morning. We moved along at the rate of about 12 to 14 miles a day for nearly a week. We then left the prairies of Kansas that had been interspersed with wooded sections, and entered the plains of Nebraska. . . . Fuel was becoming scarce. . . . Bands of Indians occasionally passed us, some in war paint. Moving along day after day, we came to the junction of the emigrant road from St. Joe, Mo.; here there were still more emigrants on the way.

"Our hurried driving for nearly 200 miles was telling upon our animals as well as upon ourselves. Mother seemed more tired, so our meals were not so good. Lille was failing in her milk. Rover walked with a limp, so mother made him some canvas shoes. The shoulders of some of our oxen were getting sore; some of their feet also were getting tender. At Grand Island, in the Platte River, the emigrant road from Council Bluffs, Iowa, joined ours. Political discussions were frequent, but the thing that interested father most just then was that our stock was getting thin, and he counseled taking more time for them.

Mr. Grant agreed with him, but the other two men did not. Hence, the next noon, when we stopped to rest and let our cattle feed for an hour, they went on.

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"It was then the month of roses. We passed Ft. Kearney and were hoping to get to old Ft. Laramie in Wyoming by the 4th of July. There we would still not be half way to Oregon; it certainly was a long road. The water of the Platte River was unfit for drinking. As we moved along we began to see signs of sickness and heard that cholera was raging on up the river. As we advanced, more signs of distress appeared; worn-out oxen left at the mercy of the wolves; wrecks of wagons; fresh mounds of burials. As we drew nearer to where this dread disease was prevailing we saw more fresh graves, and met returning emigrants with many tales of woe.

"We kept going as fast as we could, yet we did try to give assistance to some by sharing our milk and medicine. Father also counseled with some as to the best ways of treating the sick ones, for often they knew nothing about treating such patients, or had nothing with which to treat them. One day Louvina began suddenly to complain and soon was very ill. As soon as possible father put up our tent some distance away, and put her on a bed in it. Cynthia soon followed. Father took full charge and told the rest of us to keep out. We hustled about keeping plenty of hot water, mustard drafts, etc. Mr. Grant's family camped quite a distance beyond us, but waited and did what they could to help.

"Many other emigrants were also detained in adjacent camps, and we glimpsed and heard of their grief over the quick work of the silent reaper. One night there were 17 graves made in that vicinity. I thought of the wailing of the Egyptians, and prayed that God would spare our little sisters. In a few days Cynthia was well enough to take out, but Louvina lay hovering between life and death for many more. Sometimes I would wander away for a little and wish she were well. One of those times I found a few wild roses just bloomed out, and took them to the tent. Coming to the opening, father said: 'I believe your sister is breathing a little better.' My feet fairly flew doing his bidding. Next morning he was rewarded by seeing her open her eyes,

with the dawning of intelligence in them.

"While we were in anxiety our animals were making the most of this enforced rest. Rover would lie sleeping and stretching for hours, and our cattle would graze until filled, lie down, chew their cuds, then get up and feed again. The horses rolled and rolled, then got up, put their heads down and ate to their hearts' content. The tender feet and sore shoulders were healed. Father now often got to ride and rest up a little.

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"It must have been about the middle of July when we came near to Old Ft. Laramie. The day we left North Platte we had to make a long drive in order to get to Willow Springs, on Sweetwater River. We traveled far into the night, and in the morning we went on again until nearly noon. We were glad to rest the remainder of that day. . . . Near the head of Sweetwater it was quite cold. We all tried to hustle for wood, as we needed a bon-fire. Near this place is the divide between the interior streams and the waters of the Pacific. Between this divide and Green River is another desert of 35 or 40 miles. We started in one afternoon, traveling all night, and came out at noon the next day, stopping only an hour to eat breakfast and rest our stock.

"During our long trip through Wyoming, we saw many other emigrants who were in far worse condition than we. Many oxen had given out, and cows had taken their places in the teams. Some wagons had to be left, so the occupants were doubling up with others. Food was running low. Many were sick and discouraged, some still turned back.

"All along the way we had met and been passed by hundreds of Indians. They invariably said they were peaceable, yet we heard of their stealing stock, and sometimes holding them for ransom. One morning one of our horses was missing. While we were about where Granger is now, a band passed us, going our way. Next morning we started out as usual. About 5 or 6 miles along, John was sent on ahead to look up a nooning place. Louvina and I were walking. John halted at a little creek some distance ahead. At the same time we saw an Indian camp making ready to leave. Suddenly a commotion ensued among them; about 20, some on horseback, started toward John. They tried to stampede his horses, then surrounded him and

waited for our wagons to come up. When we arrived, several Indians rode in front of our teams to bar further progress. At the same time a young Indian rode up to the back of our wagon and threw a lasso at me, but I was so near the wagon that it struck the sheet above my head. Before he could gather it up again Louvina and I were in the wagon where I soon buttoned down the cover.

"Other Indians, after jerking John off, were taking his horse. Others were scuffling with father, to get his revolver and gun. Several were attacking the Grant family, some of whom were screaming. Mr. Grant also had his gun, and he and father were ready to sell their lives as dearly as possible, for they fully believed, now, that a massacre was intended.

"We were completely surrounded but, for some reason, they hesitated to make the final attack. Assured now of our helpless condition, they became more bold. They began to close in, redoubling their efforts and yelling their war whoops. It seemed that our time had come, and I closed my eyes and asked for help. Just then a shot was heard. The Indians became silent, and to our rear they saw a party of hunters. Farther back there was also a great cloud of dust.

"Almost instantly all those Indians vanished like smoke, and we gasped our relief. Some of us cried, some laughed, some collapsed. The hunters rode up. They had heard our screams and, noting the Indians, fired their guns. Just think--what must have been our fate but for their timely arrival! They belonged to Joab Powell's large train of wagons, that would soon arrive. That night all those wagons were formed into a large corral, inside of which were all our animals, also ourselves.

"We soon came to Soda Springs, and here our cow, Lille, died. From here, we soon came to Ft. Hall, about 12 miles north from where Pocatello now is. There were a few soldiers and other white men, also some Indian squaws, about this fort. Some emigrants who still felt the Golden Lure of '49, were going the California road from there. Needless to say, we took the other.

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"After our little train under Captain Clark left Ft. Hall, we soon came to the Snake River. After a few days we passed the beautiful American Falls. At another time we

heard a roar like thunder, and were told that it was the Shoshone Falls. As far as the eye could see there were stretches of sagebrush covering all this country.

"Captain Clark had a wife and four children. His eldest son, Jesse, was about 19 years of age. He also had a widowed sister, Mrs. McReynolds, who had lost her husband on the way. She had five children, Rebecca, the eldest, being about 15 years old. Some of the people in the train began to have what was then called mountain fever. Several of Mrs. McReynolds' children were quite sick with it, and it was hard for them to get along, as some of her oxen were also in bad condition. Her troubles added to the hardships of the Clark family.

"Jesse Clark now drove Mrs. McReynolds' team, and John drove the loose stock. Mrs. McReynolds had all she could do in caring for her sick children. Some of the Clark family also became sick, so we all tried to help. As we came to more of a rough, rocky country, the oxen began to suffer heavy losses. Footsore oxen could go no further, so wagons had to be cut down to suit the teams.

"When we came to Salmon River and its falls, Captain Clark and some of the other men decided that we might find better conditions by crossing over to the other side of Snake River. The main emigrant road went down the south side. Consequently, the feed was very scarce. But all the train, excepting the Clark family, Mrs. McReynolds, and ourselves, went on, thinking they could travel faster by the older road. Mr. Grant urged father to go with them, saying delay was dangerous, and we could not afford any risk. Father and Mother would not leave the Clarks in their helpless condition, so we crossed Snake River with them. We then found ourselves in a very interesting valley, now called Hagerman Valley. It was more like a wild meadow, only the ryegrass was tall and there were many springs bursting out of the rocky walls to the north. We were glad to rest over Sunday and give better care to the sick ones.

"Monday morning after we started on we found that there were many Indians along the river with the smallpox. They were dying by the dozens. In a few days some of the Clark children were beginning to improve, but Mrs. Clark began complaining of the fever symptoms. One morning, I felt too badly to get up. While I was ill

we finally came to Ft. Boise, located on the Boise River where it empties into the Snake."

[By the time the party was ready to cross the Snake at Ft. Boise both Mr. and Mrs. Clark were desperately ill. Mrs. Clark died during the crossing; Mr. Clark died when the party arrived at Powder River; Jesse Clark took the disease a little later, and died when the party reached the Columbia. The smaller Clark children then were taken into the McReynolds family. The Todd family, meantime, became critically short of food through sharing with their sick friends, and because of the many delays involved. Mrs. Todd gave birth to a son, Elijah, just after the Blue Mountain crossing. Before they could go further, Mr. Todd came down with the fever, now thought to have been that now known as Rocky Mountain spotted fever, but recovered quickly. At the Dalles the McReynolds and Clark family survivors were put on a boat to continue the journey, and the Todds went on by wagon alone.]

"It was now October. Our clothing was patched and thread-bare. But for mother's conscientious 'stitch in time' practice, we would have been in rags, as many of the other emigrants were. Our shoes were all worn and out at the toes. Our oxen were but skin and bones. . . . We soon found that the Cascade Mountains were also rocky, with pitches even steeper and higher than those of the Blue Mountains. We all walked over the worst places. When we came to Laurel Hill we stopped and viewed that descent with alarm. It seemed almost perpendicular.

"We found that some had cut down small trees, chaining them to the rear of their wagons. Others had fastened one end of a chain to the wagon and wrapped the other around a standing tree, then let it out little by little. . . . Father finally decided to do both. Then chains for locks were fastened to the wheels, and the brake was put on to the last notch. The locked wheels made a dismal, screeching sound that echoed through the woods. The oxen slid from side to side as they were pushed by the wagon tongue. Just before they got down, they were going at a gallop and it seemed as the great heavy wagon was going to run over them. At last! Another victory was won. Once again John shouted 'Hurrah for our team,' but that night old Buck died.

"We finally came to where there were several deserted wagons by the roadside. They still contained their valuable contents, clothing and all sorts of useful things. Knowing that the owners would not return for them, mother finally mustered up courage to take some things she needed: flat iron, coffee pot, camp kettle, wash board, and a brass candle stick. Later we met a band of Indians going back and mother always regretted she had not taken more, as we knew they would take what they wanted and perhaps burn the rest.

"About noon of the 10th day after leaving the Dalles, we began to see through the timber on ahead a vision of an open valley. Peering out, I saw that it was sprinkled over with spreading oaks, while it seemed to be surrounded by a fringe of evergreens reaching up onto those mountains and on into the blue sky above. I thought, 'Yes, this is the Oregon I have been hoping to get to.' As we drew out more into the opening, father halted his team and, coming back to the wagon, said, 'Praise the Lord, we are through at last!'

"Soon we found our way to Howell's Prairie, not far from Salem. We landed there October the 16th, having been on our way over six long months, but it surely seemed longer than that to us.

"That evening, after we were settled in camp, father again read the 107th Psalm. We noted how the Lord had gathered His redeemed out of the wilderness, and delivered the hungry and thirsty who cried unto Him. We also noted how He helped them over the deep waters, and then when we came to the latter part of the 30th verse, which reads, 'So he bringeth them unto their desired Haven,' we all felt that the Psalmist must have had us in mind when he wrote all this."

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The Todd saga well illustrates the arduous hardships, extreme privations, and risks of life, health and possessions endured by the pre-railroad generations of Western pioneers. Among the earliest settlers in Latah County were many from that daring group, as noted by Alma Keeling in her Un-covered Wagon. As we go on with our Bicentennial celebrations, and especially as we measure our accomplishments in that span, let us not forget the tribute we owe to those whose courage, vision, dedication and hard work gave us what we have today.

Annual Meeting Notes

The annual business meeting of the full membership of the Society was held at the McConnell Mansion on January 10, with some 30 members attending. Reviewing the first year's operation with the full \$9,000 of authorized county tax support funds at our disposal, official reports noted major building maintenance accomplishments. All storm windows now are fully finished and installed, and exterior painting and restoration of window frames and sashing is finished, except for the front bay. Many improvements in grounds plantings and fixtures were made. A vote of thanks was given retiring Curator Lou Cormier for 3½ years of exceptional service, to which has been largely due the excellent and ever-improving appearance of both the Mansion and its grounds.

Thanks also were extended to Alma Keeling and members of her family for producing her book, The Un-covered Wagon, and donating 50 copies to the Museum, and to John and Jeanette Talbott for the 65 covers for this book hand done by them as a contribution toward its success. Mrs. Keeling reported that additional covers now needed were bid at \$2.00 each by a Spokane firm.

The Membership Committee reported 38 new members brought in by last summer's mailings of 550 membership kits. Of those, 19 were family memberships, 16 individual, and 3 business firms. While not phenomenal, this number is a gratifying gain that, if maintained each year, could keep the Society growing. Enough kit materials are left over to repeat the drive this year.

The Publications Committee reported sale of all but 30 of the Society's 250 copies of the John Platt book, Whispers from Old Genesee, and about half of the 400 copies of Pioneer Glimpses of Latah County. On recommendation of the chairman a study committee was appointed (Berry, Banks, Platt) to look into possibilities of converting the Quarterly Bulletin to printed form, and at the same time shifting support of its publication costs from a budgeted to a subscription basis. It was noted that the Whitman County Historical Society's Bunchgrass Historian has been subscription-supported from the outset. The membership fee of \$5 includes a subscription to the Historian; non-members may subscribe

at \$3 a year. Lillian Otness reported an increase in cost of our present photocopied edition from about \$12.50 an issue in 1974 to \$35 for an issue of comparable size at the end of 1975. These costs pretty well use up total income from membership fees, since a majority of members are life members who no longer pay these fees. Going to printed form would greatly improve the readability of our Bulletin, as well as enabling us to print pictures. It is hoped these improvements would attract serious contributions of historical writings and sufficiently stronger reader interest to pay the higher costs involved.

The Calendar Committee reported visits to all towns of the county to arrange sale outlets, and direct sales of \$675 by members Elizabeth Gaston and Cora Knott. Enough calendars have been sold to make the venture quite profitable and to justify its consideration for repeating this year.

The Oral History Project status was reported by project director Sam Schrage as follows:

"1. At the end of 1974 we had a total of 186 hours of recorded interviews in the collection, as a result of 1½ years of interviewing. In 1975 we added 141 hours of tape to the collection in interviews with 53 people. This was an increase of 75% in the size of the collection. At the end of 1975 the total collection was 327 hours of tape recorded with 136 individuals. Latah County now has the largest collection of oral history of any single geographical area in the Pacific Northwest.

"2. During the spring of 1975 we secured the services of an interview transcriber through the CETA public employment program. She completed nearly 40 hours of interview transcription in four months of work. Besides this, the Idaho Bicentennial Commission employs a half-time transcriber and is giving first priority in the state to the tapes we send down for transcribing. I would estimate that they have typed between 40 and 50 hours of transcripts for us this year. We now have roughly 140 hours of typed transcripts, triple the amount that we had one year ago.

"3. Also this spring we began a cooperative program

of writing social studies booklets from the Oral History materials, for use in 4th grade and higher grades in local schools. Karen Purtee has been employed by the White Pine School District to do this work, and it has been part of my responsibility to supervise the production of these booklets. The interest of the White Pine District is to get new materials in the schools. After the program ends, it has been agreed that the responsibility for distribution of the booklets will come to the Museum Society. The Society is copyrighting the booklets. Three booklets have been printed so far; three more are in developmental stages. We have also prepared a supplemental teacher's guide to go with each booklet, and perhaps more important, a tape of interview excerpts to be listened to along with each booklet. To give you an idea of their popularity in the classes that have used them so far--in Troy for their school Christmas program this December the 4th grade put on a playlet they had written themselves, a re-enactment of the story Edward Swenson told in one of the booklets about how the pioneers celebrated Christmas in the 1890s.

"4. At this point I should say that Karen Purtee and I have been on the CETA program since last spring. This pays our salary costs to the county for use as they see fit on priority local projects. We are fortunate that our County Commissioners have chosen to back historic preservation as the two positions for this special project. Our positions are expected to run through June or September of this year. The money that we have requested from the General Fund and are seeking through private donations is for supporting expenses--tapes, mileage, phone, postage, etc. During the past year generous contributions from members of the Project Committee supplemented money from the General Fund to cover these costs."

As a special product of the Oral History Project, Mr. Schragger, Mrs. Purtee and others, under leadership of Grace Wicks, put together a 25-minute Bicentennial program of voice tape selections and pioneer pictures representing all parts of the county. This was shown during November and December in all schools of the county at junior high and high school levels to nearly 1,000 students, and in other showings to university, grange,

service club, senior citizen, faculty and other adult groups and mixed age groups totaling about as many more. Narrative and musical accompaniments were provided by KRPL radio station. The station also has prepared a video cartridge combining both the sound and photo portions of the program for independent use by schools having video projection capabilities.

This program has been enthusiastically received by all groups. Presentations have given opportunity to explain the Society and its programs to large numbers who had not heard of them before and to point out the county-wide interests involved. A great deal of favorable publicity for the Society has resulted.

The fall issue of Idaho Heritage magazine features Latah County and our Oral History Project. In addition to several articles about the county, the issue carries six pages of quotations from our oral history tapes, illustrated by sketches and introduced by an article written by Sam Schragger. This issue is of special interest to Society members and Latah County residents. It is currently available at magazine outlets throughout the state.

1976 Leadership Installed

By unanimous vote of members present, the following Society officers for 1976 were elected and vested in office:

President	Leonard Ashbaugh	Moscow
1st V. President	Eddie Nygaard	"
2nd V. President	Eugene Taylor	Juliaetta
Secretary	Gertrude Lundquist	Moscow
Treasurer	Leora Stillinger	"
Trustee-at-Large	Harry Sampson	"

Dr. Ray Berry agreed to serve another year on the Board of Trustees in the capacity of immediate past President, since Mr. Ashbaugh is serving a second term.

The Treasurer's report reflected a healthy growth in year-end carryover in the General Fund from \$743.68 at the end of 1974 to \$2,926.36 at the end of 1975:

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expense</u>	
Beginning balance	\$ 743.68	Salaries	\$2,997.49
County	9,000.00	Utilities	1,623.86
Dues	452.50	Office	986.71
Publications	4,391.77	Taxes and ins.	158.73
Donations	1,184.84	Perm. fix.	1,314.75
Door fees	135.70	Maintenance	823.75
Misc. income	<u>163.16</u>	Display	348.22
Total	\$16,071.65	Publications	3,441.99
		Misc.	368.44
		Oral history	896.35
		Total	\$12,960.29
		Misc.	153.34
			<u>\$13,113.63</u>

Balance, General Fund, January 1, 1976: \$2,926.36

The Budget Committee report below was adopted as the budget for 1976. Our budget planners faced sizable Maintenance costs again this year, with the need to replace the Mansion's water system, unchanged since the house was built. With the coming of Mr. Lee Magnuson as new Curator and carryover services by Lou Cormier for the first five months of the year, higher staff costs also are involved.

Budget for 1976

<u>Salaries</u>	
Lou Cormier through May, 5 mo. @ \$125	\$ 625
Lee Magnuson, June through Dec., 7 mo. @ \$300	2,100
Office	700
Taxes and insurance	175
Utilities	1,800
Permanent fixtures	600
Maintenance	1,700
Display	300
Publications	250
Misc. and petty cash	350
Oral history through June	500
Total	<u>\$9,100</u>

Visitor numbers at the Museum dropped in 1975 for the first time in the four years that a systematic register has been kept. Both adults and children were fewer. Fewer bus-load school class tours in 1975 seems to be the main reason in this age group. The almost equal drop in adult visits may reflect reduced tourist traffic from the level brought last year by Spokane's Expo '74.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Total</u>
1972	--	--	1,000 plus
1973	1,250	750	2,000
1974	1,471	1,055	2,526
1975	1,238	778	2,016

A sad farewell to the Society's hopes for acquiring the Nordby barn at Genesee as a historic building to house a collection of historic farm equipment came to pass last month with the decision of the Nordby family to sell it and the house to an interested buyer for \$60,000. Mr. Nordby indicated he would sell to the Museum Society at a substantial cut below this price, but unfortunately no funds were available to take advantage of the offer.

With the Bicentennial Year now upon us, we are reminded yet again of the need for more space at the Museum itself, to house and display the many pioneer artifacts and materials available to us, but now being discarded or sold out of the community by families unable to keep them any longer. Members and friends are again reminded that gifts to the Society are tax-deductible. This applies to bequests and memorials, as well as other donations. We have accumulated several thousand dollars in our Building Fund, but need far larger amounts to undertake the scale of construction needed.

The Society membership enthusiastically voted appreciation to a member, Robert J. Otness, for his recent gift to the City of Moscow of approximately two acres in the northwest sector of town for development and use as a neighborhood park to be named in honor of his pioneer great-grandfather, Almon Asbury Lieuallen. The land involved was part of Mr. Lieuallen's preemption claim of 160 acres, dating from 1881. The gift conveyed to the city what was nearly the last of this land remaining in the possession of the Lieuallen descendants.

Junior Misses Photoed at Mansion

While the Society's annual meeting affairs proceeded on the ground floor on January 10, all 32 entrants in Idaho's 1976 Junior Miss competition visited the Mansion's pioneer needlecraft exhibit room upstairs for individual portraits by Ted Cowin in their own Bicentennial costumes. By getting all their signatures on the register, we are assured of 32 remembered smiles and the someday-famous autographs of the lucky top placers due to go on to higher fame and fortune.

Bits and Pieces

The Gift of Laughter, by Alice Maxwell, is a book of 20 of her previously published short stories that may now be ordered through BookPeople of Moscow. Many of the stories deal with pioneer situations, and some relate to Idaho settings. Born in Moscow as Alice Hankinson, the author was orphaned when her father fell from scaffolding in construction of the original U. of I. Administration Building and was killed. She was raised by an aunt, Mrs. Geo. Knowles and graduated from the U. of I. As a writer, she published in national magazines, once winning a \$5,000 prize from True Story. She was honored as national president of Theta Sigma Phi, women's journalism honorary society.

The 55 (not 50 as earlier reported) copies of The Uncovered Wagon donated by Alma Lauder Keeling to the Society all have been sold, bringing \$550.00 to the Building Fund. Another 37 copies on order from Spokane already are fully committed, Alma reports, with 15 copies going to the Business and Professional Women's Club of Moscow as a donation to their scholarship fund.

If you are moving, please notify the Society of your change of address. Mail sent under our bulk permit is not forwarded nor returned to us. Help us to keep our mailing list up to date, so that you will not miss getting your copies of the Bulletin.

LATAH COUNTY
MUSEUM SOCIETY
110 South Adams
Moscow, Idaho 83843

Non-profit Organ.
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 161
Moscow, Idaho

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* * * * *
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* Welcome Aboard to Mr. Lee Magnuson as our new *
* Curator, effective January 12. Mr. Magnuson *
* is a native of Kendrick, hence thoroughly ac- *
* quainted with Latah County. Majoring in museol- *
* ogy at the U. of I., he will finish in June as *
* the first graduate in that specialization. He *
* is already familiar with the Museum from student *
* project work there. With Lou at hand to help, *
* we look for a smooth transition. *
* * * * *

"A notable Bicentennial contribution" were Lola Clyde's words for the excellent picture collection made by Ann Driscoll. Lola urged all members to see these pictures at whatever opportunity may come their way. The collection includes many current photos of forgotten and/or remote historic sites of the county, as well as important pioneer personalities. The pictures themselves are excellently done, says Lola, and are a joy to see.