

LATAH COUNTY MUSEUM SOCIETY

McConnell Mansion 110 South Adams Moscow, Idaho

Quarterly Bulletin
Kenneth B. Platt, Editor

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New Books

"Spring is bustin' out all over," and so is a spate of new publications by local authors. Fields and Pine Trees, by Mrs. Opal Ross of Farmington, Washington, is in final preparation for printing as Local History Paper No. 2 of the Society. Elephants and Donkeys, by Mary Louise Perrine, Moscow, is especially timely as the memoirs of Mary McConnell Borah, scheduled for release in June. Kites in the Empyrean, selected letters and missives of William Carr Banks, as prepared by Mary (Mrs. Wm. C.) Banks, is being released currently. Beckoning of the Bold, Rafe Gibbs' new history of Idaho, with 20 line drawings by Alfred Dunn, will be out July 1. The Horse Interlude in the Pacific Northwest, by Thomas Keith, will be along later. Underneath the Bough, collected poems of Kenneth B. Platt, is expected out in May or June. And from La Jolla, California, comes word that Carol Ririe Brink is at work on Unimportant People, a fictional story based in part on Moscow scenes and people.

Taking three former rural school districts in the extreme northwest corner of Latah County as her locus, the author of Fields and Pine Trees traces their history from first settlers a century ago down to present occupants. Pigeon Hollow, Evergreen, and Fairview districts lay along the Idaho-Washington state line bordering Farmington. The community name of Pine Creek showed on the Idaho side on very early postal maps but soon disappeared. The creek itself still flows past Farmington, draining the small basin that contains most of the area of the three former school districts. Looking back from the distance of some 35 years since consolidation

of rural school districts, it is hard to visualize that an area as small as Pigeon Hollow, with barely eight square miles of land, could supply 33 children in the elementary grades, but so it was in 1914. There were 27 in 1920 and 39 in 1921. Mrs. Ross' painstaking account traces the development that came to Pigeon Hollow and the other two districts as they pioneered, prospered, matured, and changed with the evolution to modern farming.

In Elephants and Donkeys author Perrine gives us intimate insights into both the official and the private life of her famous aunt. The work of Mrs. Borah in helping returned veterans of World War I to find jobs and get going again, and in rehabilitating shell shock victims, is of special interest. Based on interviews and other fact-gathering done in the 1946-52 period, the manuscript has rested in the University of Idaho archives for many years. At the time it was written national publishers declined to handle it, feeling that Senator Borah's death in 1940 had removed the public interest needed to make the book a success. The death of Mrs. Borah in January of this year triggered a new look, and now it is to be published by the University Press, a division of the Idaho Research Foundation.

Also published by the Foundation is the Banks book of letters. This promises to be especially prized by literature lovers, as Prof. Banks long enjoyed the reputation of being a superb letter writer. Indeed, it was recipients of these letters who proposed the publication. The letters will cover a wide range of subject matter in the lively fashion of personal communications not written for publication, over a period of 44 years. Their content will make them well worth reading, apart from considerations of literary excellence.

To those who have enjoyed This Was Wheat Farming, Tom Keith's horse book will come as a welcome addition. More than ten years in the making, it goes to earliest beginnings but gives special attention to the development of draft breeds to handle the heavy farm loads of the pre-tractor, dirt-road era of the Palouse and other

Northwest areas. The book is rich in authentic and excellent photo illustrations.

From nationally known authors Brink, Perrine, and Gibbs to first-story writer Ross, all these authors have one thing in common—their love of the local scene and local people, tying all of them to Latah themes. The dedication poem in the Platt collection is illustrative:

Paradise

Tempt me not again to Eden, oh world, wide world.
Tempt me not again. I have seen your beauties, wonders.
Far and wide have I gone, tasting strange fruits, new ways.
Breathed soft airs and warm, sweet laden tropics.
Walked new lands and old; known east winds, known
north and south.
From all returned to west winds of the Palouse,
four-seasoned;
To summer suns burning gold upon gold upon gold,
to far horizons.

Tempt me not again, lost Edens. Here will I stay.
Paradise is where the heart is: Set foot that way.

Vital Statistics: Fields, ca. 50 pages PB, \$2.50; Elephants, 85 pages PB, \$3.95 pre-publication, \$4.75 later; Kites, 70-80 pages HB, \$6.95; Beckoning, 336 pages HB, \$10.95 pre-publication, \$12.95 later; Underneath, 110 pages PB, \$3.00. University Press editions should be ordered direct, attention Earl Larrison.

That Old Black Magic!

Magic came to the Moscow High School auditorium on the afternoon and evening of March 27 under leadership of The Great Zingo, alias H. Robert Otness of Moscow. Billed as the Hocus Pocus Parade, the show drew an estimated 800 viewers, who sat spellbound for two hours of mystification and fun.

Chuck Tinder, "Baffling" Bruce Budge, Jr., Greg Wells, and Zingo himself produced various objects out of thin air and caused them to disappear the same way. Ropes and ribbons were cut to scraps, then plucked whole again from visibly empty cylinders and boxes. No less than eight metal rods were thrust through one beautiful damsel; another was cut into five head-to-foot cross sections; but both were miraculously released unharmed. Yet another maiden was set floating on a table top in mid-air, while all visible supports were removed. Houdini himself could not have bettered the count of 19 it took Greg Wells to escape unaided from the Moscow Police Department's best manacles and the stocks locked around his legs.

The Society wishes to thank the magicians as well as their assistants, Terri Daniel, Chrissi Brewer, Joanie Wells, and Lillian Otness; the stage managers, Patsy Budge and Susie Tinder; and Jon Wheaton, whose help with construction of properties contributed greatly. Society members who assisted with arrangements include Sam Schragger, Kenneth Platt, Lola Clyde, Leonard Ashbaugh, Leora Stillinger, Ruth and Francis Nonini, Mildred Haberly, Margaret Walker, Nancy Atkinson, Carol Renfrew, Gertrude Lundquist, Lou Cormier, and Lee Magnuson. Special thanks to Don and Mary Evelyn DuSault for organizing the telephone committee as well as assisting at the door.

The possibility of promoting other benefit events as a means of raising money for special programs of the Society might well be explored by the Board of Trustees. Such projects not only would bring in needed funds but would help to publicize the Society and its programs and could build a stronger Society by drawing more of the members into direct involvement in its activities. Two possibilities which have already been suggested are a Victorian style show and a summertime ice cream social. It would seem worthwhile for the Board to consider the appointment of a fund-raising committee to plan and carry out such events.

The \$378.00 in ticket receipts went for benefit of the Oral History Project field and office operations, now

being paid for by private donations. A special donation of \$250.00 was recently received from Potlatch Forests in appreciation of the extensive coverage given the logging industry on Oral History tapes and slides.

Shown preceding the magic at each performance was the Oral History Project Bicentennial slide and sound program, now a veteran of more than 40 showings, some 15 of which were made during the January-March quarter. Now extensively edited and rearranged from the original numbers, the slides were recently copied for the official duplicate of the program being provided to the State Historical Society. The quotes from interview tapes, and the accompanying commentary supplied by John Mix of KRPL/Moscow, remain unchanged.

The four remaining showings scheduled for April are expected to be the last. When these are done, it is estimated that more than 4,000 viewers will have seen and heard the program. The Society takes pride in having made a notable contribution to both adult and school-age education throughout the county with these showings.

Mary Borah, In Memoriam

On January 14, 1976, news media of the Northwest announced the death of one of its most highly regarded citizens. Mary McConnell Borah was daughter of one of Idaho's most famous men, widow of another, and a recognized great lady in her own right. The following obituary, and a memorial tribute, as printed in Moscow's Daily Idahonian, are reproduced in full here for the information and records of those readers who may not have had opportunity to read them there.

"Mary Borah Dies" (1/15/76)

"Mary McConnell Borah, widow of one of Idaho's most illustrious citizens and daughter of the state's third governor, died last night in Beaverton, Ore. She was 105 years old.

"The widow of William E. Borah, Idaho senator noted for his isolationist stand and opposition to war before and after World War I, had been blind for several years. In frail health for some time, her condition had deteriorated recently. Death came at 8:10 p.m. in the Maryville Nursing Home.

"With all Idahoans, I share a sense of loss over the death of Mrs. Borah," Governor Cecil D. Andrus told the Associated Press. 'She was a grand and fine lady, who, like her husband, added luster and honor to this state.'

"Born October 16, 1871, in Arcata, California, to Mr. and Mrs. William J. McConnell, she came to Moscow in 1886, after her father had established a department store and built a home for his family. The home, now a museum, is headquarters for the Latah County Museum Society.

"She married Borah, a Boise lawyer, in 1895. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1907, serving until his death in 1940. The University of Idaho's annual Borah Symposium on the outlawry of war was established in his honor.

"In the latter part of his 32 years in the Senate, Borah was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and helped shape foreign policy in the years before World War II.

"Mrs. Borah remained in Washington, D. C., for several years after Borah died. She was an avid collector of elephantine figurines (the Borahs were Republicans) and was well known for her political acumen.

"Seriously ill while a young woman, her ailment was diagnosed as psittacosis, contracted from a parrot received as a gift.

"The couple had no children. Survivors include three nieces, Mrs. Mary Louise Perrine of Moscow, Mrs. William Schedler and Mrs. Alan Ainslie of Portland,

Ore., and a nephew, Ben Bush, Jr., of Los Angeles.

"Services will be at 1:30 Monday at St. Michael's Cathedral, Boise."

Mary Borah

By Clara M. Grove 1/21/76

"The past sunny Sunday afternoon [January 18] many Moscow people gathered at the McConnell Mansion in memory of Mary, many years wife, and many more years widow of William E. Borah, many years U.S. Senator from Idaho.

"The memorial service was presided over by the Rev. Leonard Ervin Rymes, who opened the brief program with prayer. The eulogy by Lou Cormier followed. With knowledge of that of which he spoke, Mr. Cormier portrayed Mary Borah as a folksy, kind hearted woman, rather than her quiet, dignified appearances as the wife of one of the great men of our nation. Her years as wife were followed by many years as widow, until death released her at the age of 105 years.

"Mr. Cormier related the little incidents of Mrs. Borah's winning the friendship of a diffident young man named Tom. Her friendship with this young man who was in need of a friend continued to, and after, his death. The eulogy concluded with the thought that when Mrs. Borah finished her journey here, she would receive a welcome into her true home.

"Accompanied at the piano by Darrell Bozett, violinist Jeanette Platt added much to the beauty of the program with her Brahms' Lullaby and Consolation, by Mendelssohn.

"The antique table from which tea was served was covered with a lace cloth that obscured the beauty of the cherry wood. Everywhere one looked, there was an oldtime something of matchless beauty. The beauty and

perfect state of preservation of the davenport--not called by that name at that time--was breathtaking. And here we were met, in the beauty of these antiques, preserved for future generations, in memory of Mary Borah in the home that her father, the first elected Governor of Idaho, had begun the building of in 1883, with lumber brought from Walla Walla. The interior woodwork, such as the Venetian blinds at the windows, were brought from California. To this day, those blinds dating from 1883 still work perfectly.

"So here we were in this old, old-time mansion, with Mary Louise Perrine, the granddaughter of the first elected Governor of Idaho, sitting in the Governor's chair. Mrs. Perrine will be remembered as author of Nanabah's Friend, and Salt Boy. A life size portrait of the Governor hung above the cheerful open fire. Receiving us at the door as we arrived were Mr. and Mrs. Harry Sampson. Eileen Condell, accompanied by Betty Horton Taylor and Mary Thompson Kiblen, was in charge of the guest book. Present also, among many other old-timers in Moscow, was Bernadine Adair Cornelison, sister of Ione Adair, and daughter of Dr. Adair, who had owned the McConnell Mansion from 1903 to 1936. Dr. Adair was one of the early doctors in Moscow.

"Two long cornices in the Mansion are especially noticeable, and have an odd reason for being. Each is at the top of a space for which material had been purchased for drapes, but it was found that not enough material had been purchased to fill the spaces. So an order was given to Mr. J. J. Anthony [former Moscow cabinet shop operator] to make two exactly alike cornices of a height to allow the drapery material to reach the floor. With no tools but a coping saw, a jackknife and a wood chisel, so the story goes, Mr. Anthony created two long cornices, exactly alike, of great beauty.

"Though many of the articles are of the olden times, there are others that were given at the present time while the building was being reconditioned and

refitted, such as the work-of-art large board given by Elizabeth Hagedorn. Placed near the street, the board identifies the place.

"Dr. Church, the last owner of the McConnell Mansion, told me of his hope that the Mansion as a gift would be accepted from him; that going East at one time to the old family home, he found one room of the house so full of articles sent there after the death of family members that entrance to the room was impossible. And now he was the only one left. So his wonderful gift was accepted, and many in Moscow gave time and more to make this museum what it is now. And how fitting that this lovely memorial service for Mary Borah was held in the house that has stood so firmly and strongly through all the years since her own father had built it for his family.

"A word of appreciation must be spoken to Mrs. Earl (Lola) Clyde, daughter of a pioneer Latah family, for the history she supplied."

McConnell Memorabilia

Most members of the Society know that William J. McConnell was a leading Moscow merchant when he built the present McConnell Mansion in 1883, and that he became the first elected Governor of Idaho when it was made a state in 1890. But what prior experiences and events laid the foundation for these crowning achievements in a notable pioneer career? Where did McConnell come from, and how were his leadership qualities developed?

Elsewhere in this issue is a brief tribute to Mary McConnell Borah, the distinguished daughter of this distinguished man, commemorating her recent death. It is timely in this connection to present additional background of her father, as part of a due regard for the family who gave their name to the present home of the Latah County Museum.

William J. McConnell was born in 1839 at Commerce, Michigan. He came to Idaho in 1863 with the gold rush then scouring the Boise Basin and adjacent areas. The following account of his arrival and subsequent experiences in that area is drawn from Nellie Ireton Mills' history of the Payette Valley, All Along the River, published in 1963 in a limited edition and no longer available. As will be seen, the young McConnell did not come seeking adventure or glory, but events and circumstances soon proved his mettle and set him in what was to become a lifelong pattern of leadership. As Mrs. Mills writes:

"Two travellers leading their pack horses around the bend of the river early in April of '63 differed from the majority in that they were not hunting mines, but rather were looking for a little farm--a garden patch with rich ground. John Porter, a Canadian, and his 23-year old companion, W. J. (Bill) McConnell from near Lafayette, in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, had decided to throw in their luck together and raise produce for the miners. While outfitting in Portland, their landlady gave Bill a wash pan full of onion sets, which they planted first in the garden they located on Porter Creek, a mile from the Payette and four miles from Horseshoe Bend. In six weeks the onions, tied in bunches at \$1.00 per dozen, brought \$100.00 in Placerville. These were the first green vegetables sold in the Basin, and later that year watermelons grown by McConnell and Porter sold in Idaho City for as much as \$8.00 each at 25¢ per pound."

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"Between the Shafer and Brownlee trails, two other much-used early-day trails crossed the mountains to the Basin. One went up Porter Creek, over which McConnell probably packed his vegetables, and another, developed by Conrad Wertz--Con, the Packer--up the little creek and through the little valley where he had his headquarters, known as The Jackass Trail, in honor of his pack-string of donkeys.

"Although the bill forming the Territory of Idaho was signed by President Lincoln on March 3, 1863, it was

not until August 7 of that year that the mention of Idaho Territory appeared in the records. Eighteen days later, August 25, 1863, all roads and trails built by miners and others, and all natural Indian trails, were declared by the County Commissioners of Boise County, now Idaho, to be public highways. The Brownlee Trail came into its own then, as well as the trail up the river. Legal actions of that date were, however, of doubtful authority, because Idaho had no legal government until after the called general elections in October, 1863. No wonder crime was rife on the trails, in the mining camps, and along the river. Hoping to improve this situation, Boise County Commissioners had held an election in April of that spring and a bluff at law enforcement was attempted, but everything done was declared illegal later."

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"Fear and resentment against the lawless element continued to grow, until all at once a spark set the fire that caused the organization of the Payette Valley Vigilance Committee. That spark was the stealing of a saddle horse in the Basin from young Bill McConnell, a vegetable peddler from Jerusalem. Twenty-three-year-old McConnell and his packer, on a return trip from Idaho City, camped for the night on Grimes Creek and awoke in the morning to find that Bill's staked saddle horse had been stolen. Inquiry and tracks revealed that the thieves had gone out to Boise over the Harris-Shafer Creek trail. As soon as he could reach home and get fresh horses, McConnell and a companion started after the thieves, arriving in Boise early the next morning. However, by that time the horse had evidently been driven across the Boise River to the thieves' brushy rendezvous ranch in South Boise. A careful search of feedlots and feed stables in town failed to locate it. The search, however, was not without its reward, because in the feed stable owned and managed by Opdyke, the sheriff, McConnell found a mare stolen from him two months before.

"In a crooked justice's court, with much expense and trouble, the young rancher managed to get possession of his mare. Before he left town, he delivered a characteristic McConnell ultimatum to a jeering crowd on a corner, telling them if he lost another horse, the thief would be his 'Indian' without trial. Arriving home, he found that in his absence nine head of horses and mules, belonging to him and his partner and three other vegetable farmers in the neighborhood, had been stolen and spirited down the river--presumably on to Oregon. Four heavily armed men, with McConnell in the lead and each leading an extra saddle horse, immediately took the mountainous but shorter Brownlee Trail for Oregon. Three weeks later they returned with their stolen, skeleton-poor horses and mules. They had caught up with the thieves on the Grande Ronde River below the valley of that name. Of that encounter McConnell laconically wrote: 'The transfer was not a friendly one, but if any casualties occurred, they were all on one side.' The rest is left to the reader's imagination. It was at a roadhouse on the return trip, that open war was declared against horse thieves and stage robbers.

"The four men were as tired as their horses when they reached home, but not too tired to call a meeting of all the citizens of their locality at the McConnell-Porter Ranch on Porter Creek, above Horseshoe Bend. Resolutions were adopted, pledging a united stand on all matters concerning personal and property safety, and further pledging themselves to pursue to capture, regardless of expense, all horse thieves operating in that section. Punishment was to be administered to the best of their judgment, but with the cryptic warning that farmers were not prepared to hold prisoners.

"News of the action of the Jerusalem and Horseshoe Bend farmers quickly spread to the lower valley. A group assembled at the Block House below Emmett, with Henry Paddock of the Bug-Haypress Ranch as chairman, and decided to do something definite about all lawlessness. Each settler, from Brainard Creek (Jerusalem) to the Washoe Ferry on the Snake River, was contacted and asked to attend a general meeting at the Block House.

Nearly all of them came, with Henry Paddock presiding. Then it was the resolutions were passed concerning horse thieves, highwaymen, and bogus dust operators. All were to have a fair trial before a jury of seven; if convicted, they were to be sentenced to leave the country at once, be publicly horsewhipped, or, in extreme cases, suffer capital punishment.

"Conklin, the bogus dust agent at Pickett Corral, was given twenty-four hours to leave the country, which he did. The Stewart Brothers, keepers of the ferry on the Oregon side of the Snake at Washoe, who were known to harbor many questionable characters, were also run out of the country. The Pickett Corral gang was broken up --horse thieves or highwaymen either left the country or reformed. Within three months the valley became a safe, pleasant place to live.

"Urged on by his henchmen, Opdyke, the sheriff, arrested many members of the Vigilance Committee, but so unsavory was the reputation of the officials and witnesses, there were no convictions. Vigilance committees also were organized in Idaho City and Boise, but while interrelated with the committee on the Payette, that is another and different story. Opdyke eventually was hanged by unknown parties."

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"The day after the Vigilance Committee was organized, Bill McConnell, the cocky but determined young leader, and a frequent visitor at the Flurnoy stage station, mounted a good horse, rode down from his Porter Creek ranch twenty-two miles away, and stopped to see how everything was doing. They told him at once of dire threats against his life, made by the Pickett Corral gang. Not waiting even to dismount, McConnell whirled his horse and defiantly rode alone to the outlaws' rendezvous to tell them that he was not afraid, and to warn them that the Committee meant business and the sooner they got out of the country, the better."

* * * * *

"The Block House occupies a prominent place in Payette River history. Being commodious and centrally located,

it was a meeting place for river citizens and it was here the two organizational meetings for the Payette Valley Vigilantes were called to order by Henry Paddock and led by William J. McConnell, as Captain."

* * * * *

"While ranches were being taken up along the Payette east of the present town, a few miles to the southwest pioneer settlers on Washoe Bottom along the Snake were meeting and solving almost identical problems. Washoe Bottom, with its early Snake River ferry, flanked by a nefarious roadhouse on the Oregon side, was much in the news in the early sixties. It was one of the first places raided and closed by the Payette Valley Vigilantes in 1865. Seizing the owners, the Stewart Brothers, with a long list of robberies and unexplained disappearances hanging over their heads, Captain W. J. McConnell and his lieutenants took their prisoners to Bluff Station on the Payette and locked them in a cabin for safety. In the dead of night McConnell took the responsibility of sending them off down the Oregon Trail with a threat of death if they ever returned. (Read McConnell's History of Idaho for the aftermath). The Vigilantes had accomplished their purpose. The Washoe Gang was broken up and run out of the country."

* * * * *

With these experiences to his profit so early in life, it is not surprising that McConnell went on to a successful business career in California, and arrived at Moscow some twenty years later as a man of substance and stature. He was well fitted by both background and natural capacity to become Idaho's first elected governor when the page of history opened to that point.

At the Museum

Visitors during the January-March quarter totaled 685, reports trainee curator Lee Magnuson. School groups aggregated 139, as Idaho history classes were brought in from Moscow schools to see the excellent displays of pioneer settings and items.

The breakdown of attendance figures for this period is as follows:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Child</u>	<u>Total</u>
January	185	75	260
February	106	150	256
March	115	54	169

Special groups which visited the Museum during the first quarter of the year include the Northwest History Group of the Faculty Women's Club of the University of Idaho, two groups of Camp Fire Girls, three groups of Cub Scouts, a Presbyterian Women's group, the Moscow Historical Club, Alpha Delta Kappa (educators' honorary), and the Northwest History group of the Faculty Women's Club of Washington State University.

With Curator Lou Cormier directing, new displays now in preparation include a country kitchen and a Mary Borah costume display room. Progress has been slow because Mr. Magnuson still is under a heavy study load in his final semester at the University.

Financial Statement 4/1/76

General Account

Publications Fund	\$1,348.63
Oral History Fund	569.74
General Checking Fund	<u>5,278.08</u>
Total	\$7,196.45

Special Savings - Building Fund

Bank of Idaho	\$ 172.61
Bank Certificates 1 @	1,300.00
1 @	1,000.00
1 @	<u>1,000.00</u>
Total	\$3,300.00

LATAH COUNTY
MUSEUM SOCIETY
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Moscow, Idaho 83843

Non-profit Organ.
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DUES ARE DUE!

Members who received renewal notices with the January issue of the Quarterly Bulletin are reminded to send in yearly dues (\$5.00 individual, \$9.00 family) if they have not already done so. In addition to other benefits of membership, this will assure your receiving future copies of this publication.