

LATAH COUNTY MUSEUM SOCIETY

McConnell Mansion 110 South Adams Moscow, Idaho

Quarterly Bulletin
Kenneth B. Platt, Editor

Volume 4, No. 4
October 1, 1975

As we go to press with this issue, a new drive for expanded membership in the Society is under way. Coincident with a September 11 full-page ad in the Idahonian, letters were sent to 600 carefully selected names of prospective new members throughout the county. The selections were the result of several months' work by the Membership Committee of Don and Mary Evelyn DuSault, Rosemary Shull, Marguerite Laughlin, and Mildred Haberly and headed by Carol Renfrew. This group also sent out the letters with a Museum Society brochure, a membership application blank, and a return-addressed envelope enclosed with each. Membership cards--a new idea--will be sent to all new members brought in by the drive. Meanwhile the committee will welcome opportunities to talk to interested groups about the Society and its programs.

Calendar sales got off to good starts in most communities of the county early in September, report Elizabeth Gaston and Cora Knott, who have been spearheading this project. Of the 1,000 printed, over 200 had been sold by September 20, with many more in the hands of local groups which are selling them on commission.

Nearly every community has a PTA or other locally sponsored calendar, Elizabeth and Cora report, and because of this some have been reluctant to undertake selling the Museum Society's calendar. The unique nature of our calendars, with their historic date record and the fine collection of pioneer scene photos, gives them a special appeal which we hope more and more users will come to appreciate. Every member should lend a hand in selling the remainder of these calendars, all proceeds from which go into the general fund of the Society.

Book sales, principally of John A. Platt's Whispers from Old Genesee, also have gone well, with less than 90 copies of this special memorial edition still on hand at the Museum out of the 250 originally stocked. New interest in the book, it is hoped, will result from a half-hour television program which was taped by the Publications Committee (Jeannette Talbott, Lillian Otness, and Kenneth Platt) and Curator Lou Cormier for showing on Channel 5, KRPL, Moscow, at a later date. By courtesy of the station, the Society will be given an excellent viewing time in a spot assigned for public service presentations. The generous half-hour time allowance enabled the group to make a general sweep of the Society's objectives and programs, with about the last ten minutes devoted to our publications activities as a whole, and the book sales project in particular.

As shown in the Treasurer's report elsewhere, sales of this book up to September 2 had returned just enough to pay the costs of buying the 250 copies from the publisher. It is the sales from now on that will put money in the Publications Fund, to a total of about \$675 when all are sold. Members are urged to help in spreading the word on these remaining bargain sales, the Society's price tag being \$6.95, while the commercial bookstall price is \$8.95. Tell your friends to tell their friends! \$6.95 at the Museum or \$7.25 by mail; checks payable to Latah County Museum Society.

The Society's exhibit at the Latah County Fair, September 12-13-14, once more attracted enthusiastic visitor attention. Clifford Ott's splendid wall display of historic scenes from all communities and occupations of the county, together with seven books of his photos on particular subjects (e.g., harvesting) and communities, seldom was without from two to six or eight viewers, many of whom came back repeatedly. Two-and three-generation groups were noted from time to time, with delighted remarks going back and forth as older members were recognized in the pictures, and small-fry exclamations like "Were you really there?" and "Look, there's Grandpa!" popped out.

Calendar displays sharing the walls, with several different pictures on view, sparked many requests for purchase which were directed to the Historical Club's sale stand out in front of the fair pavilion. Books for sale by the Society also were on display, with orders being listed for attention by the Museum office.

This year's exhibit space was more favorably located and provided better viewer access than has been the case in previous years. Request is being made to the Fair Board that this space be assigned the Society each year, until other arrangements become desirable.

Treasurer's Report

The following figures show main items of current interest as summarized to September 2, 1975:

Balance in General Fund		\$3,522.48
Special savings account at Bank of Idaho		472.83
Building Fund savings, Idaho 1st National:		
Savings certificate	\$1,372.50)	
" "	1,000.00)	2,372.50
Total sales of Platt book		1,065.35
Postage on 53 books mailed		15.90
Net proceeds		<u>1,044.45</u>
Initial cost of books		1,042.50
Net balance to Publications Fund		<u>1.95</u>
Calendar printing and binding costs		1,121.95
Calendar sales to date		345.00
Oral History Project:		
Society appropriation		500.00
New private donations		310.00
Total operating funds		<u>810.00</u>
Office costs	\$335.69)	
Mileage costs	358.20)	639.89
Net operating balance		<u>\$116.11</u>

New Curator Sought

In this day of early retirements but with more and more people continuing in useful activities after ceasing their career occupations, there should be someone around who would find living at and tending McConnell Mansion an opportunity to his or her liking. The job offers an unusual combination of incentives: comfortable free private living space in uniquely elegant surroundings, a large degree of self-direction in doing the necessary work, a significant part in helping to restore and preserve treasured historic mementoes of our community, daily contact with a wide range of interested and interesting people visiting or working at the Museum. The dedication to public service which the job implicitly calls for is balanced by more than usual public appreciation.

The Trustees will welcome all suggestions of prospective candidates. They wish to fill the position by the end of the year, and earlier if possible.

* * * * *

Mansion maintenance, repairs and improvements accomplished this summer, as reported by Curator Lou Cormier, have included:

- Repainting of all porches and steps
- Repainting of all second-floor and most first-floor window frames, and reputtying and repainting of sash
- Outside washing of all windows, and closer fitting of storm windows after the repainting
- Replacement of back steps, and addition of a small patio deck there to complement use of the flower garden for afternoon outdoor affairs
- Addition of a white picket fence along the back end of the lot, enhancing the formally re-landscaped flower beds
- Painting of the storage shed
- Trees on Second Street trimmed higher to give clear vision of traffic
- Trees on adjoining Adair lot border trimmed to remove limbs hanging over the Mansion front porch and obstructing light to upstairs windows

Nearly all this work has been done as part of the activities of Kevin Warenecke, University museology student assigned to the Society for practical training in museum operations, under direction of Mr. Cormier.

"Weather permitting, we will have the other half of the back porch with a new deck on it," Lou reports. "All these improvements of the property make for a more pleasing and complete way of serving the public, for which the Museum is intended."

Reservations for school tours of the Museum are coming in ahead of schedule, Mr. Cormier notes--a favorable omen for the future. Increased interest from schools may be expected to result from the use of our Oral History tapes and booklets, mentioned elsewhere in this issue.

Museum visitors from July 1 to now were 395 adults and 55 children.

Oral History Fits Bicentennial Theme

The national Bicentennial theme of appreciation for our pioneer beginnings is at the core of the Society's oral history project. In the course of gathering some 285 hours of tape and thousands of pages of typed transcripts from 135 informants over the past two years, the project has gained recognition as the exemplar of its kind in the Northwest. Increasingly, project director Sam Schrager is being recognized as a leading authority and pace setter in this field, as he is called on more and more to speak at conferences on oral history methods. Most recently, he was a speaker at the North Idaho Oral History Conference at Coeur d'Alene.

The value for future reference of the above documentary record of still extant pioneer recollections and personalities is sure to multiply over the next few years as these sources of our history pass irretrievably from further access. The Society may well congratulate itself on having sponsored and supported this project at this particularly timely juncture, when it has both met a critical need for saving action and produced a signif-

icant and continuing contribution toward fuller appreciation of the foundations of our national heritage.

It is gratifying to see these materials now being put to rapidly increasing use in the schools of the county. The two booklets prepared last spring from the tapes for use at 4th grade level have proved attractive at junior high level as well. Printed in small numbers for initial testing under auspices of the North Idaho Multi-District (Potlatch-Troy-Deary-~~Bovill~~-Kendrick-Genesee), the booklets now are being reproduced in 400 to 600 copies each to meet requests already generated. These will be sold to schools at cost (about 50¢ each), according to Herb Heustis of Troy, who is heading the Latah County CETA-funded project for drawing usable curriculum materials out of the original tapes and transcripts. Two more booklets in preparation by Karen Purtee, social studies curriculum writer under the CETA grant, are expected to be ready in about a month, Heustis reports.

The initial two booklets, telling of homesteading in the valley of Park as recollected by Edward Swenson and frontier days in the white pine country as remembered by Arthur Bjerke of Deary, were tried in 4th grade classes at Troy, Deary, Genesee, Kendrick, and Plummer and in junior high classes at the latter two schools last spring. Both pupil and teacher response was enthusiastic in all schools.

The key to this success, teachers think, is the pairing of voice tapes of the authors with reading of the booklets. The booklet alone would be just another reading assignment, they say, while the tape alone would lack tangible substance, but the two combine to convey their story in a way that makes the narration an exciting and "real life" experience to young listeners.

During the summer inquiries came in from schools and libraries all over Idaho and from many points outside the state, says Heustis. With more booklets available for sample distribution from the larger printings now being made, a much wider demand is foreseen.

The many Society members and friends who have donated a

total of more than \$6,300 out of the funds needed so far for the Oral History Project can take real satisfaction from the benefits now being realized. At the same time we may note that there still is much equally useful recording for the project to accomplish if its funding can be extended. Continuation of CETA funding will pay Mr. Schrager's salary through the remainder of 1975 and possibly through June of 1976. The Society's budget, however, has no funds for operational needs of the work. Some \$300 is needed from private sources to meet travel and recording costs over the next three months, and an additional \$500 would enable the project to be continued until the middle of next year. Donations for this purpose will be helping a proven good cause and will be most gratefully received. Checks may be sent to the McConnell Mansion, 110 South Adams, Moscow, Idaho, and should be made payable to the Latah County Museum Society and designated for the Oral History Project.

The celebration planned by the local Bicentennial Committee will focus on oral history during the month of November. A program based on the Museum Society's tapes is now being prepared and will be presented next month to schools and other groups in communities throughout the county. In addition to presentations before organizations, a program open to the public without charge is scheduled for Moscow for Sunday, November 2 at the Eggan Youth Center at 2:00 p.m. Members are urged to attend and to encourage their friends to attend. For the program in other communities of the county, please watch local news sources for announcements of times and places.

More Local History in Print

Mrs. Alma Lauder Keeling is making fifty copies of The Un-Covered Wagon available for sale, with all proceeds to go to the Latah County Museum Society. This is her account of the pioneer Taylor and Lauder families and of Moscow beginnings and early development. Numerous pioneer photos and a cover featuring a color picture make this a most attractive volume. The price is \$10.00. Orders may be sent to the Museum Society or to Mrs. Keeling at 1320 Deakin, Moscow, Idaho 83843.

Book Review

Most previous Bulletin reviews of writings about pioneer times and doings have dealt primarily with early settlers and the conditions they coped with. A rereading of these reviews all at one sitting could make an interesting hour or two for members who have saved their Bulletins.

The present review covers a manuscript which looks at pioneering times as seen by an early merchant family of Latah County. Those of us from rural backgrounds tend to forget that early businessmen also worked hard and lived frugally, meanwhile risking their scarce capital resources to finance trade ventures vital to development of the country, but by no means assured of success. When hard times struck, many of these ventures failed, and their owners had to start again from scratch. The fact that Latah County today has only about one fifth the number of trade centers that once existed within its boundaries is mute testimony to the hundreds of historic figures who "paid their dues," so to speak, in business investments in communities now defunct, or in enterprises wiped out by financial misfortune even though the community survived.

Some Recollections of Homer David, 1890 to 1910 shows what went into the making of David's Store, long the leading mercantile establishment of Moscow and a large surrounding area. The account not only covers this David family enterprise through its pioneer ups and downs, but also looks around at what was happening to other businesses in the same period. Written in June 1966, these Recollections were never widely circulated. We are pleased to be able to give Quarterly Bulletin readers the illustrative portions quoted here:

"Our family came to Moscow in 1890, when I was nine years old, so I remember the events of that period quite well. Recently, in talking to the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, he asked me about some of the early history of the town, and some other persons have asked me to write these recollections, so this is my effort.

"The 1890's were interesting years, and businessmen were aggressive and, in spite of the national panic of 1893, considerable progress was made. In fact, the largest buildings on our Main Street today were built in the 1890's. . . . The modes of transportation and the ways of doing business gradually changed. During the pioneer days, and even the 1890's and early 1900's, a great deal of business was done on credit, and people, particularly farmers, would trade at the stores and pay their bills once a year. Since we had a store, and I became a full-time employee in 1901, after graduating from the University of Idaho, I well remember how the farmers would come in and pay their bill once a year, and it was the custom to always give them some kind of a present at the time they paid their bill--a hat, or something for the wives. During those years, the personalities in businesses had a great deal to do with the loyalty of customers. It isn't that way today. I remember when people would come to the store with the children, Father David would always give the children candy, or remember an anniversary, or give the family presents when the children were married, and things of that nature. The stores were adequate, but there was no cash and carry, or markets, as they are today.

"It is interesting to think of the changes in Moscow, and I am going to mention a few things. For instance, there was no electricity in Moscow until the late 1890's, and there was no rural electrification for fifty or more years after that, so it went from candles to lamps, and as I remember the lamps, there were hand lamps which had a bowl, a wick and burner, and a glass globe. Coal oil, which later was called kerosene, was used for the lighting fuel. Later, wall brackets were placed on the wall, with a squatty lamp, and then there were hanging lamps--elaborately decorated--perhaps with prisms and colored shades that were placed in the parlor, along with the horsehair sofas, the whatnots, organs and Brussels carpets. I presume the lamps were used in the country until rural electrification became a fact. After coal oil lamps came the Coleman gas lamps.

"Then it was the telephone era. In the early 1890's, the first telephone line came into Moscow. It was a

single line, and they had a central office only, with a girl operator whose name, I remember, was Maude Cole, who later married a Mr. Frederick of Seattle, who was a partner of the Frederick and Nelson store. I was the very first messenger boy that this office had. My duty was, if a call came in for a businessman on the street, to go out and tell him, and he would have to come to the central office to take the call. There was not another phone in the town. Some years later, there were some phones installed in town, and a man by the name of C. F. Lake, I believe, was the first man to have charge of that office, at one time in the First National Bank Building. In later years, larger offices and more phones were installed, and Ezra Meeker enlarged the system. Later, W. W. Langdon took over, and still later, the Interstate Telephone Company of Spokane, which had established offices all over the Palouse country, came to town, and a Moscow boy, Clarence Johnson, was the head of this telephone Company. . . .

"Of course, washing machines and kitchen equipment, as it is today, was unknown. A wood tub and washboard, an iron kitchen range, and a broom were about all the household equipment they had. I think by 1910, some company put out a washing machine with a wooden tub, with a lever on the top that, by pushing it back and forth, moved an agitator in the tub. This type is the first model I can remember.

"Saturday was the trading day--the day when the farmers brought their produce--butter, eggs, and other things--to town. The men would go to the office in the store and get their cigar, as was the custom. The women would congregate around the large stoves, especially in the cooler weather, and the entire day would be spent in visiting, while the men would do other business, or have a social drink in the saloons, or sit on the wooden benches lined along Main Street. . . .

"Our store gave aluminum pieces [tokens] representing cash for the produce, and that was the same as cash over the counter. I still see some of those old coins around, as I do the thermometers we always gave for Christmas presents. Many of the customers, when they

paid their bills in the fall or winter, would bring in, for instance, sausage by the hundred-pound lots for credit on account. The Hordemanns, Bruegemanns and Jackshas would make that good old German sausage, and how good it was, with sourdough buckwheat pancakes. No trouble to sell it, because the folks in town would have standing orders for it when we received it. . . . Butter was another item, made in two-pound rolls wrapped in cheese cloth. There were country people who made the finest, sweetest butter, and brought it in every week. We had customers over town who used butter made by the same people for many, many years. The Burke's, the Gibbs', the Neighbors', and many others who had a reputation for the very best. . . .

"Several people have asked me to write more, especially about the history of the store, and of the David Family. This I do with some modesty. The David family tree dates back as far as 1537, as I have it. The Davids were a family of painters and sculptors, whose works are now exhibited in museums in Europe and America. They were French Huguenots, who went to Holland for religious freedom, and from there migrated to America in 1636, landing at Davenport Neck, Long Island, where they founded a town called New Rochelle. There is a David Island off the coast, which we presume was named for the David family. Our ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War; two, father and son named John. . . . Father's mother's name was Ruark, of Pennsylvania Dutch descent. Mother's heritage was one-half Scotch, and one-half English. Her maiden name was Jameson, and her mother's name was Parslow.

"Father David was born in 1855 on a farm near Mineral Point, Wisconsin. There he went to a country school, attended the Platville Normal School a couple of years before going to work for a druggist in Muscoda. There he married Ella Maria Jameson, the daughter of Dr. Wm. Kirk Jameson, in 1876.

"The David family came from Muscoda, Wisconsin to Moscow in June, 1890. Father David had come out in 1889, with his brother-in-law, H. R. Smith, who married Mother's sister. Mr. Smith had been Superintendent of

Schools in Richland Center, Wisconsin. The two bought land from Mace Cornwall, who had also lived in Muscoda before coming to Moscow, and decided to settle in Moscow, rather than to go on to Seattle, as originally planned. I think Father was influenced in his decision by the fact that the University of Idaho had been located in Moscow in 1889, and he was interested in having his family get an education. Of course, another factor was that the Palouse country was a fertile valley, and the climate was good.

"The trip west from Wisconsin to Moscow was a memorable one for me. I was nine years old on June 18, 1890, the day we started. I had been given a knife for my birthday present, and after boarding the train for St. Paul, I was leaning out of the car window and dropped the knife. It almost broke my heart. . . .

"At that time there was no ventilation in the cars, and the windows were opened for fresh air. The cinders came flying into the car from the engine. Mother had packed a large lunch basket, for there were no sleepers or diners on trains in those days. We stayed over night at a hotel in St. Paul, and the next day began a journey that may have taken four or more days to Spokane.

"At one end of the car was a stove which could be used by passengers at meal times, if they wished to warm food. There were no electric lights on the train then, and as it became dark, the brakeman would come through the train with his lighter and stool, to light the gas fixtures. We arrived in Spokane and stayed at the Merchants' Hotel, on the banks of the River, as I remember, about where the Spokane Club is now located. It was there I saw my first electric light, hanging down from the ceiling on a green cord. The bulb fascinated me, and I remember turning it on and off.

"We came to Moscow on the O. R. & N. Railroad, that had been built into Moscow in 1886, and stayed the first week or so at the Hotel Del Norte (now Moscow Manor) before moving into a rented house, owned by a Mrs. Tait, at the corner of Van Buren and B Streets. I now

live in this same location, having purchased the property in 1908. The old house, of course, was moved, and I built my present home after my marriage in 1910.

"Father and Mr. Smith started a sawmill . . . near what was the village of Cornwall, seven miles East of Moscow, a thriving little place with stores, saloons, and a few families. Timber was available there, but Father was not a sawmill man, so went to work for McConnell-Maguire Co. that fall, and placed his four children in the public schools. In 1891 he bought an interest in the store. In 1891 a new building was built at the corner of First and Main (on borrowed capital), now the Thatuna Apartments. In 1893 the Nation was suffering from a severe depression. The store could not pay its debts, so went into the hands of a receiver. Father lost all he had invested, a sum of \$45,000, which at that time was a considerable amount.

"Father then went to work for Mix and White who had a nursery, selling fruit trees, for a salary of \$50.00 a month. He traveled over the country, as far as Grangeville on the south, and Rosalia on the north, with a team and small hack. He sold the first prune trees ever planted in this area.

"We never missed any school, never went hungry--but our fare was plain. Father's mother, who lived with us, knitted our caps, stockings, etc., which helped a lot. Once a month, Father would come home. I remember that when Father would come, we all got haircuts, Father making the rounds with his clippers. One day we would be at school with long hair, the next, with heads clipped all over.

"In the meantime, Father and a man named Rhodes became interested in a gold mine at Florence, Idaho, and in the summer of 1896, they took in a five-stamp mill, with an eight-horse mule team for hauling the heavy machinery. . . . The mine did not prove profitable, and in the fall of 1896 Father took a bankrupt stock of dry goods from Juliaetta, owned by a Spokane Bank, brought it to Moscow and opened a store. Later he bought this small stock, increased the inventory, put in a grocery

department, and that was the beginning of Davids' Inc. It was located in what is now the State Liquor Store, with a fifteen-foot front.

"I was in high school at this time, and since it was before telephones, I would walk over town, from the east side to the west side, taking grocery orders. After school, it was my job to deliver these groceries with a one-horse rig. . . . Later the store moved across the street to the Spicer Block (now Crossler-O'Connor Building). In 1899, he and a partner, Mr. Ely, bought the Dernham Kaufman Building, at the corner of Main and Third, the present location of Davids' Inc.

"Father David's idea of coming to Moscow so that his children might have an advanced education really materialized in a big way. All five of them attended the University, then my four boys, and my sister's daughter Helen, and with the husbands, wives of these children, and grandchildren who graduated from the University, this adds up to at least sixty years that members of the David clan were enrolled. My three sons went on to other schools: Franklin and Kirk to Medical Schools, Harvard and Columbia; Homer, Jr., received his advanced degree from Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. James has followed merchandising since leaving the University of Idaho.

"There are many pioneer families I would like to mention, who were fine citizens, but of course I can't mention all. Then, there are so many old customers of the Store who became friends over the years. As I have said, in those early days people traded at stores where they liked the owners, and I may say that many customers traded at the Store because of a friendliness for Frank A. David. He was the same to men, women and children, and to this day many mention him to me. He smoked a pipe, and they remember him with his pipe and friendly manner.

"I was in the store from June, 1901, when I graduated from the University, until 1959, when I retired, and we sold the business—fifty-eight years in one building, through good times and bad, as far as the economy of

the nation was concerned, through the several remodeling times of the store itself, the major one being in 1919-20. Depressions came and went--1907, 1913, then after 1919. At the time, we had borrowed a large sum of money to remodel the store. Prices of merchandise fell fifty per cent, business fell off, collections could not be made, and we had large monthly payments to make on what we had borrowed. We weathered this, however, and the subsequent one in the 1930's, that the present generation remembers, when the banks closed temporarily, when wages were reduced twenty per cent, at least, all over town. (May I say that our Store was one business that did not reduce the salaries during those trying years, and we survived), the business prospered, and when we sold in 1959, we had built one of the largest volume businesses in Northern Idaho. . . .

"Compared to the transportation of the present time, I might give you an idea of how things were when I went to the University. I would walk over to the University and we drilled for an hour, from 7:30 to 8:30. Then I would walk home to lunch--about a mile. Then I would walk back. In the afternoon, I would go out for football practice, track and/or baseball. Home again for supper (the evening meal in those days). I milked our cow, which was kept in the barn on the premises. On weekends I would walk back to the University to get my girl friend, and if there was a dance downtown, we would walk back downtown. Then I would walk her home, and then walk back again. That would be equal, I suppose, to eight miles a day, at least, besides the exercise in military drill and athletic training. . . . In those days if it were an extra special occasion, I might hire a horse-drawn cab from Frank Neely, who had a livery barn. I think the toll was about 25¢, and five cents for each additional person. . . . This was a real sporty gesture."

LATAH COUNTY
MUSEUM SOCIETY
110 South Adams
Moscow, Idaho 83843

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

Dr. and Mrs. H. Robert Otness
P. O. Box 8104
Moscow ID 83843

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COMING EVENTS

Saturday, October 18: Annual fall pot-luck dinner.
12:30 p.m. at the McConnell Mansion.

Sunday, November 2: Bicentennial presentation--a pro-
gram of oral history. 2:00 p.m. at the
Eggen Youth Center. See paragraph 2, page 7.

* **WANTED:** Responsible senior citizen to serve as *
* caretaker of the Museum. Ideal situation for *
* retired man and wife. Duties are to protect and *
* care for the Museum property, to prepare and *
* show exhibits, to show visitors through the Mus- *
* eum, to manage the Museum schedule of events and *
* group visitations, etc. *

* A small but comfortable apartment in the Museum *
* is provided, together with heat, light, water, *
* and phone. Salary is small, but the employee *
* will be free a large part of the time. *

* More details on page 4. For more information *
* call the Museum, 882-1004 or Ray M. Berry, *
* 882-7773. *
