



LATAH LEGACY

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McConnell Mansion: Celebrating 125 Years
Ridin' the Bug in the Old Company Town Days
Batter Up! America's Baseball Epidemic in Latah County

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LATAH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

McConnell Mansion Celebrating 125 Years

by Ann Catt, Latah County Historical Society curator

For nearly 125 years the old house at 110 South Adams Street has stood guard from its hilltop vantage point, keeping watch over the huge transition of a small town, primarily farmers and loggers, to a bustling community of university and business people. "If these walls could talk" is an overused phrase, but think about it... "If these walls could talk"!

Can you hear them? The people who have lived, laughed, cried, celebrated the highest accomplishments as well as the deepest disappointment and sorrow are here in this house. Those who lived here and those who give or have given so much of themselves to preserving our amazing history are crowded into these rooms. Opening the front door and taking my first step into the house brings an overwhelming feeling of warmth and presence. As many visitors have pointed out, sometimes you feel as though the residents of the house are going to walk around the corner to greet you.

From his arrival in Moscow in 1878, Governor William J. McConnell split his time between his business interests here and his family, still residing in Yamhill, Oregon. Finally it was time to bring his family here to become a real part of Idaho history.

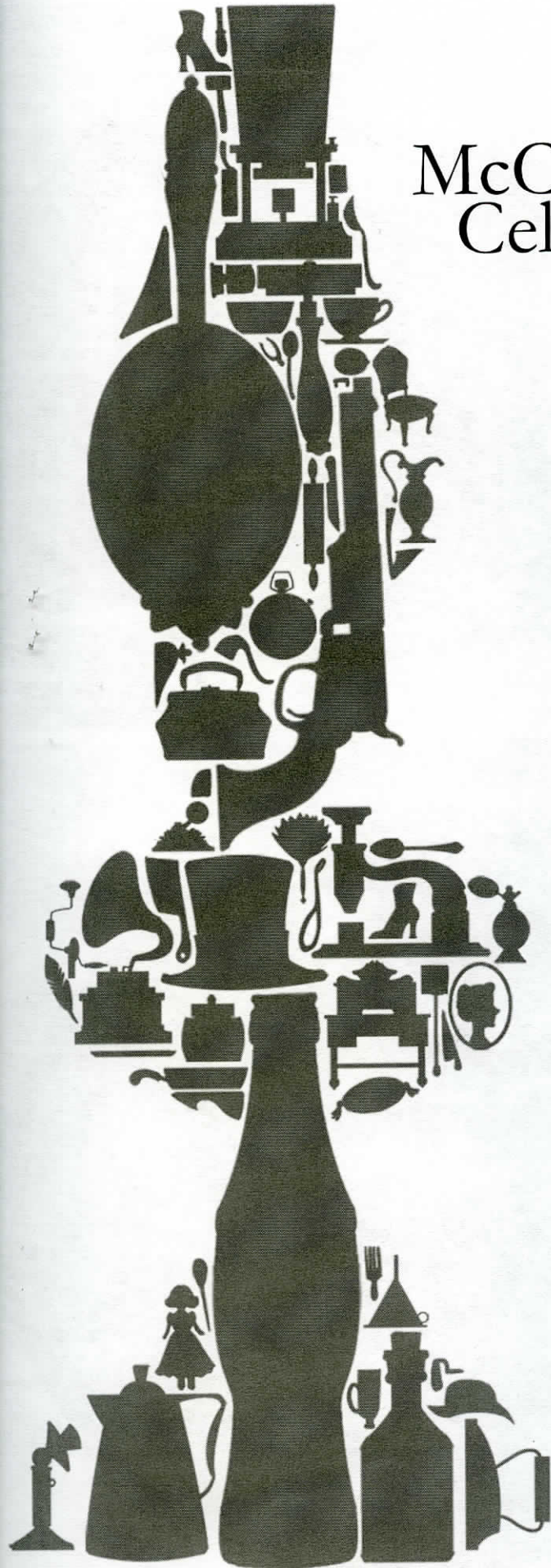
The property for the building of a fine structure that would be their home was purchased by William J. McConnell in 1883. It included all of Block One of the Russell Addition. *The Moscow Mirror* followed construction:

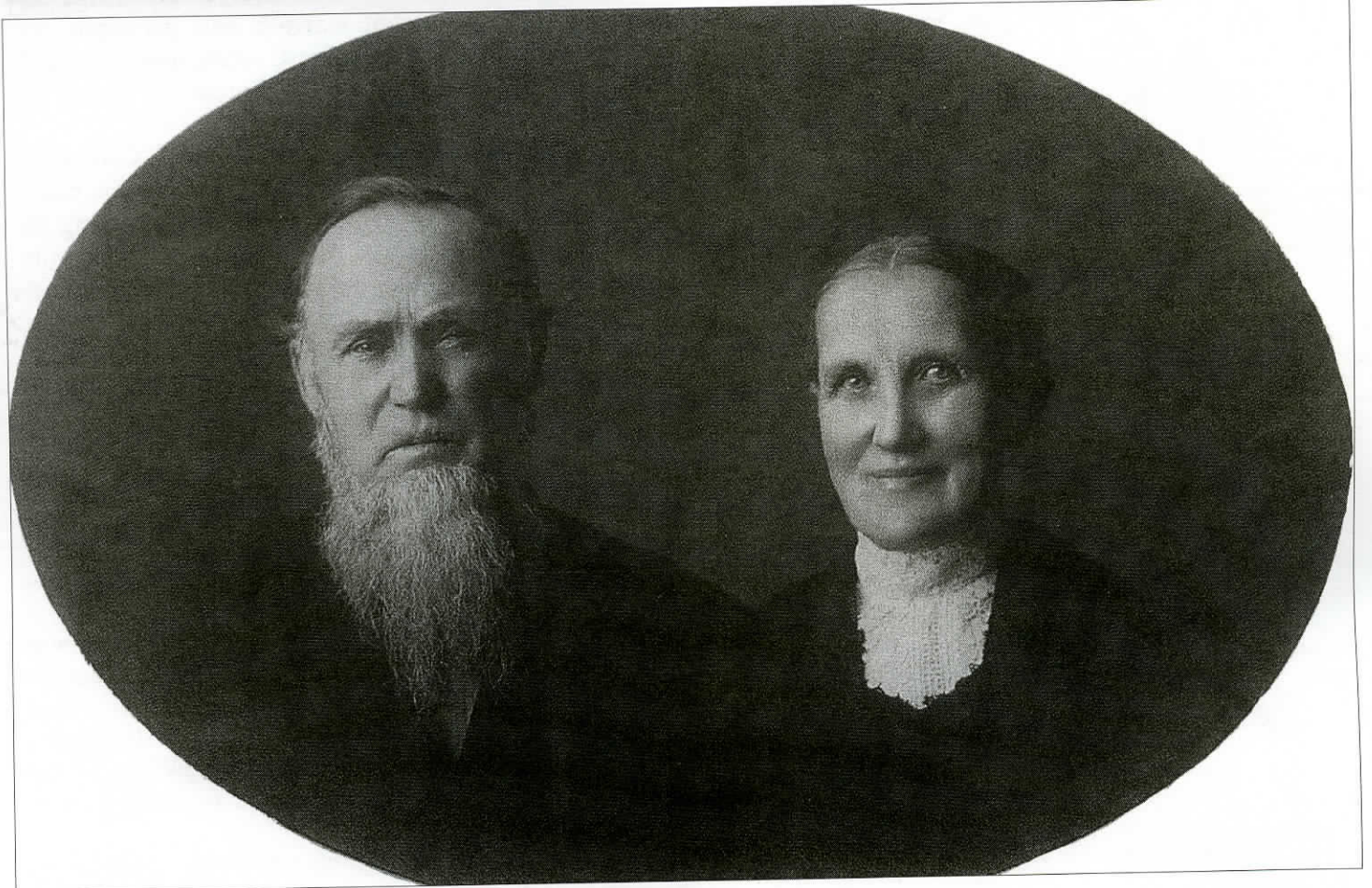
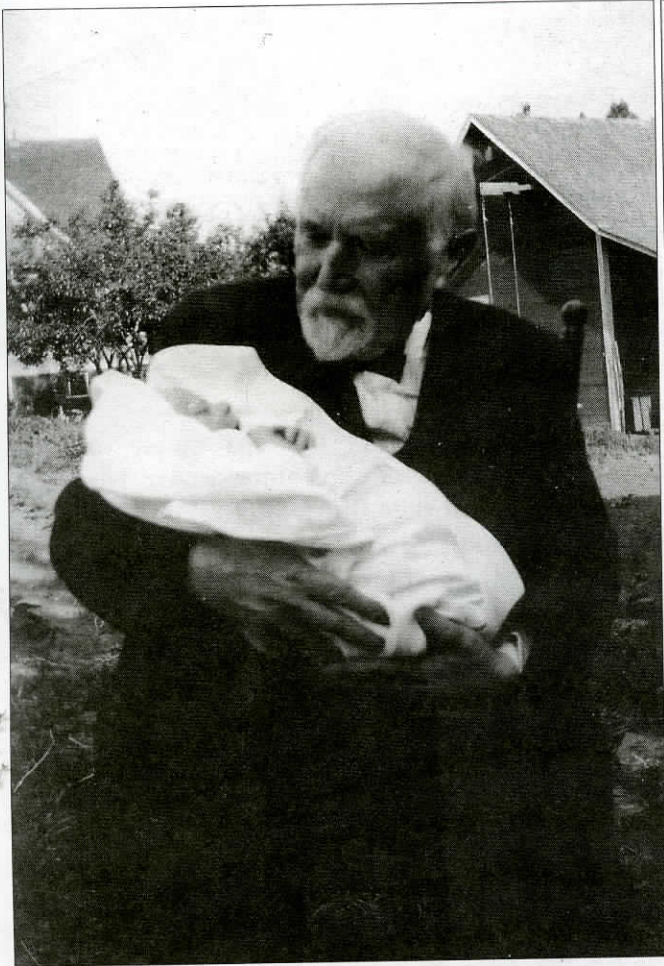
July 2, 1886: *Teams are busy hauling rock foundation of W. J. McConnell's new residence.*

July 23, 1886: *W.J. McConnell's house foundation is almost finished and indicates that a fine house will surmount it.*

August 27, 1886: *W.J. McConnell has a family residence in this city nearly finished of imposing structure. It occupies a prominent site overlooking the city. It is a two story building with a basement department. Its appearance indicates comfort and elegance and we are of the opinion that when it is finished it will be a structure of which Moscow may be proud.*

December 10, 1886: *W.J. McConnell will soon occupy his new residence.*





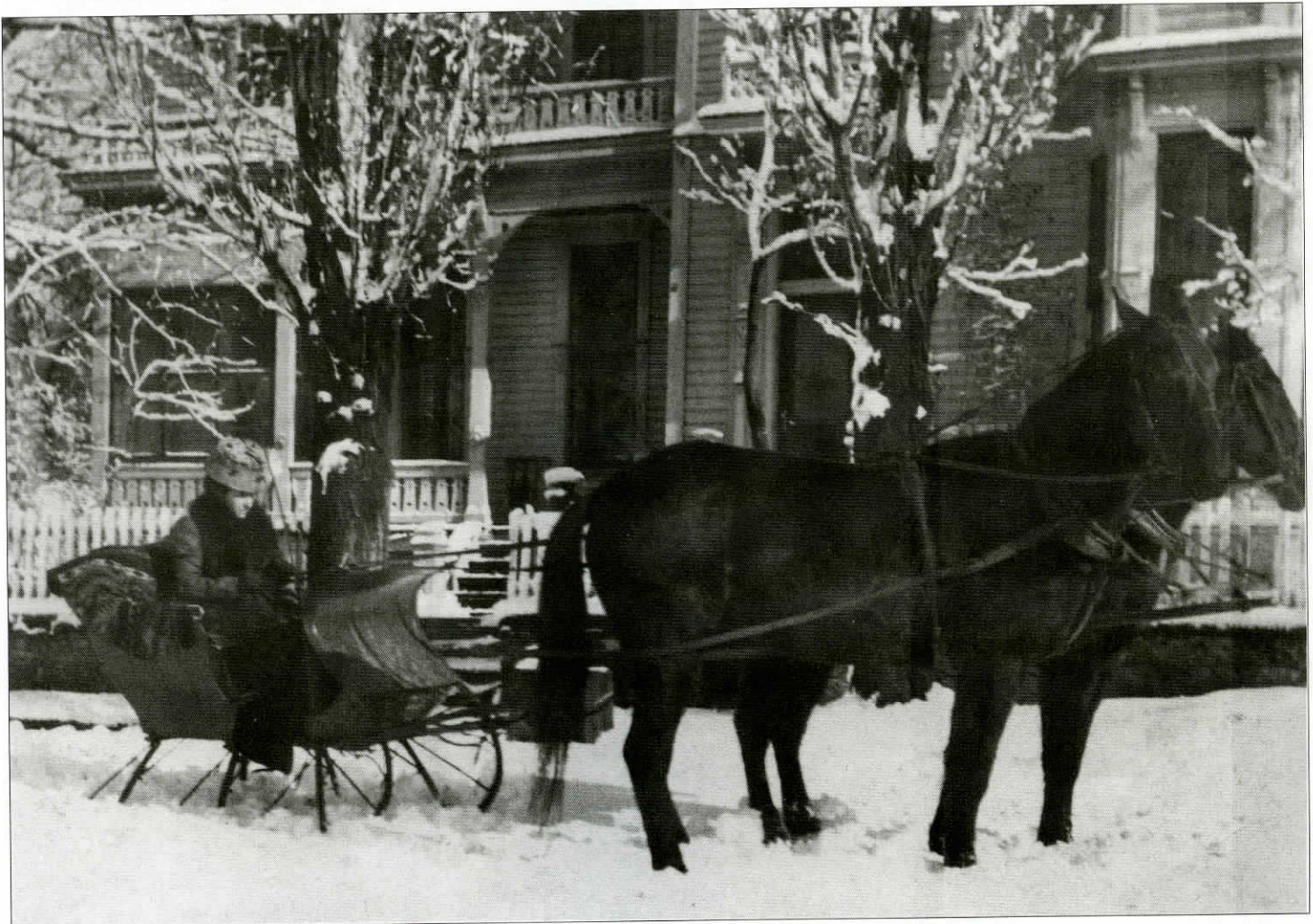
December, 1886: *The wife and family of Hon. W.J. McConnell arrived this week and are nicely ensconced in their new dwelling.*

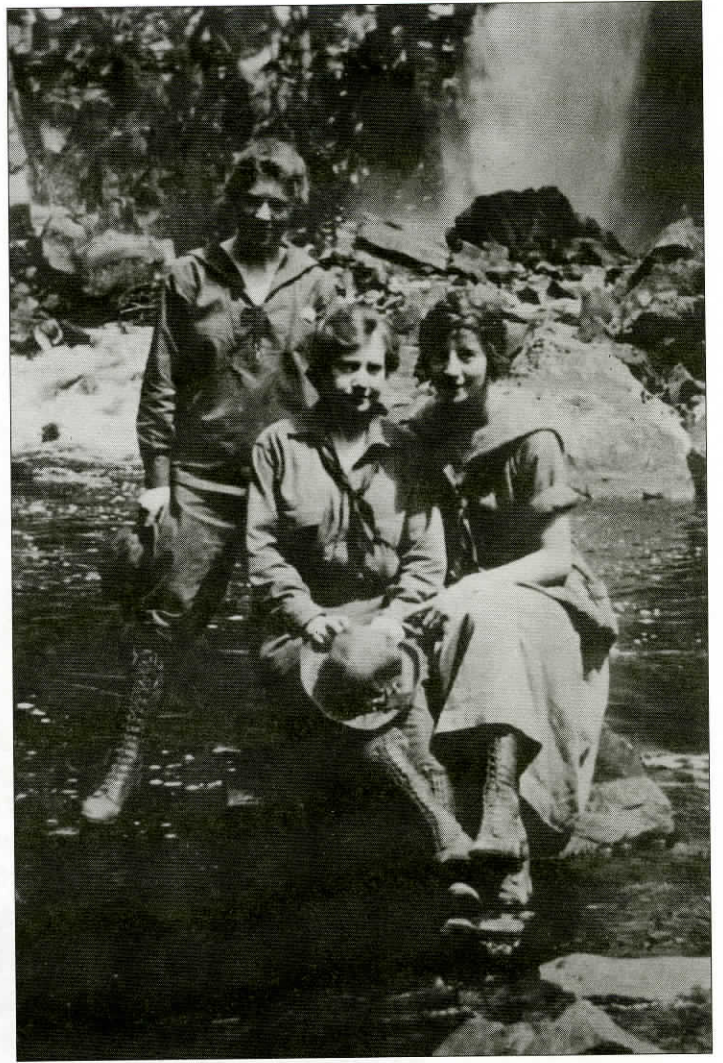
As they stepped through the door on that Christmas Eve in 1886, the McConnell family left an indelible footprint. They arrived from the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company's depot where Allen Ramstedt, who had helped build the house, met them with a horse drawn, straw filled sleigh. They arrived to a gaily decorated house filled with cheerful company and good food. Can you imagine the elation of arriving in a glorious new and beautiful home for the first time with all of the excitement of a new life in this fresh new place ahead of them? Here they spent the next 11 years of their lives, unknowingly headed for the devastating loss of everything material, including their home.

William McConnell was here when he was elected the first senator from Idaho and he was here in 1893 when he was elected Governor. Mrs. Louisa

McConnell sent her oldest daughter "Mamie" to Boise with her father to act as his official hostess as well as part time secretary for a variety of reasons. Not only was Louisa extremely shy, she was left with the burden of filing a homestead act application to save their home after the Great Panic of 1893 took everything they had. They were able to hang on until 1897 when the Governor returned to Moscow. Although they moved out of the home they had so cherished, they remained in the city for the rest of their lives. The Governor was later appointed by the President of the United States as an Indian inspector and later an immigration agent. He was so highly thought of in the community that on one particular day local author Carol Rylie Brink, as a child, was walking down the street with an older friend. They saw Governor McConnell walking down the street. The friend said to Carol, "there is the old governor, don't forget that you have seen him."

Previous page: Upper left — William J. McConnell and grandchild, McConnell photo file at Latah County Historical Society (LCHS). Upper right — McConnell Mansion, 1970s, LCHS #1-5-307. Bottom — Allen and Greta Marie Ramstedt, friends of the McConnell's who greeted the family upon arrival in Moscow. Photo courtesy of Nancy Ruth Peterson. This page: Lousina Adair in a horse-drawn cutter, pictured in front of her home, Adair photo file, LCHS.



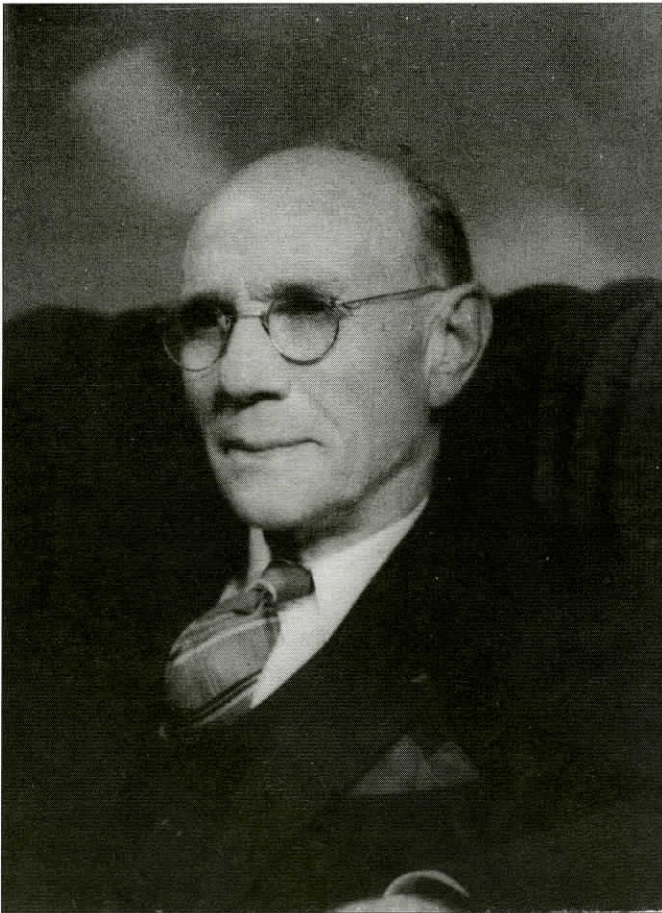


For a time the big old house on Adams Street sat empty.

In 1901 another family came to call the house "home." Then Dr. and Mrs. William (Lousina) Adair brought their four active and gifted girls to live there. There are many, many stories about this family during their time in the house. At one time they had a bear cub as a pet. That lasted until he climbed a tree and it took a "whole cabodde of firemen" to get him down. Ione (Pinkie) loved to take pictures with her Kodak Brownie camera so Dr. Adair installed a dark room beneath the main stairway so she could do the film processing herself. After homesteading in the Clearwater area, Pinkie, having been recruited to cook for the fire crews battling the great fires of 1910, stumbled home to this house and her family. She had caught the last train out of the Silver Valley and then walked the rest of the way home. Her family had not heard anything of her for 38 days.

Phyllis Gibson, daughter of the Adair's youngest daughter Marjorie, visited the house several years ago. It was one of the very best times I have ever had there because her stories actually gave life to the house for me. I have carried that since. As she walked

through the front door she told me that her Grandmother Adair would allow her to slide down the steep banister as long as she had a dust cloth in her hand on the way down. We walked in the alley and she explained to me how they would bring the big copper wash tub out to the alley from the basement to do the laundry outside during the hot days of summer. She spoke too of time spent in the dining room, a gathering place during the Adair years. Many people enjoyed having meals with the family. A large console radio was a centerpiece in that room and time was spent there hooking the rugs that were so popular at that time. The fainting couch that is now in the front parlor was in the dining room as well. Phyllis told me that the southeast bedroom at the head of the stairs was used by her mother Marjorie. Sister Lula was married in the front parlor in 1908. Pinkie with her adventurous times, along with her sisters, Lula, Bernadine, and Marjorie filled the house with noise and laughter until Dr. and his lady passed in 1934. (A younger daughter Flora had passed away in 1900 at the age of eleven.) The lovely red brick duplex next door at 106 South Adams Street was built by the Adairs and would be Pinkie's home until she passed away at 94 years young in 1977.



Previous page: Left — the Adair's daughter Lula playing with the family's pet bear, Adair photo file, LCHS. Upper right—Adair daughters Ione, Bernadine and Lula at Lower Elk River Falls in 1914, Adair photo file, LCHS. This page: Top — Thomas Jackson and his wife were the third owners of the McConnell house, from 1935 to 1941. Bottom — Dr. and Mrs. Adair, owners from 1901 to 1934, Adair photo file, LCHS.



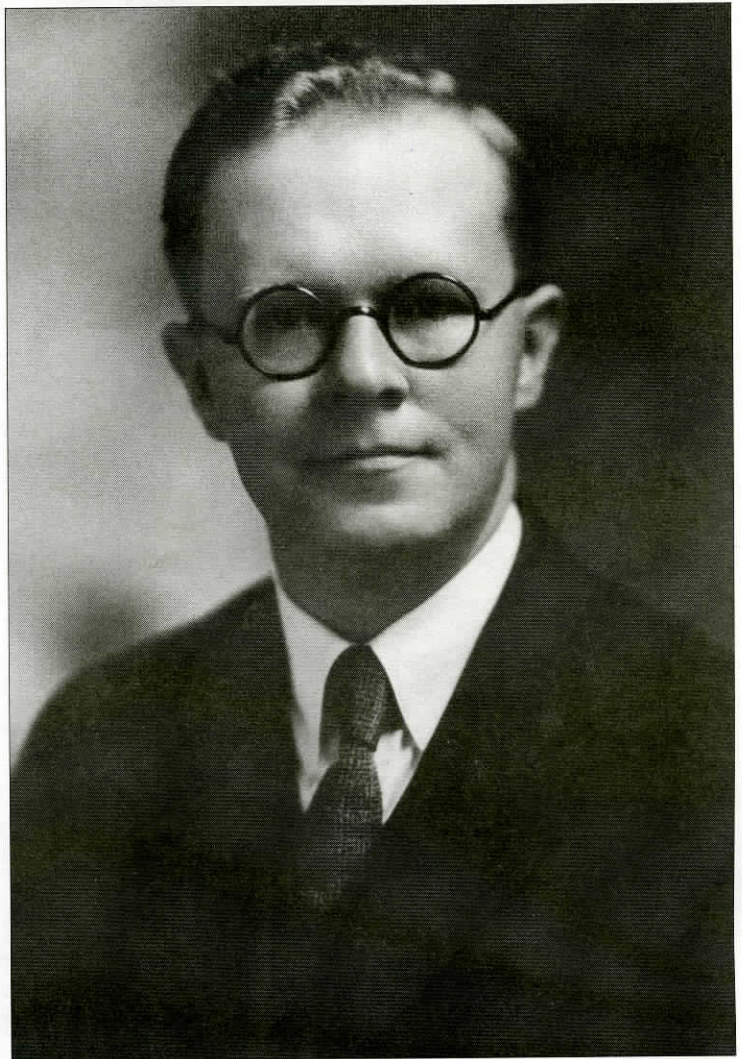
Purchasing the house on July 1, 1935 were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jackson and their teenage son. Mr. Jackson worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. The appraised value of the house was \$5000. The Moscow Mirror interviewed the new owners. Mrs. Jackson stated: *At first we thought we would remodel the house by lowering the ceilings and changing the rooms, but the house is so well made and windows run nearly to the ceiling, so we decided it would be too expensive. Now we feel that any change would destroy the atmosphere of the house and ruin its charm.* The couple rented out the large front parlor and the small back bedroom in addition to the three suites upstairs. They were a warm and friendly family and their renters were soon addressing them as Mom and Dad.



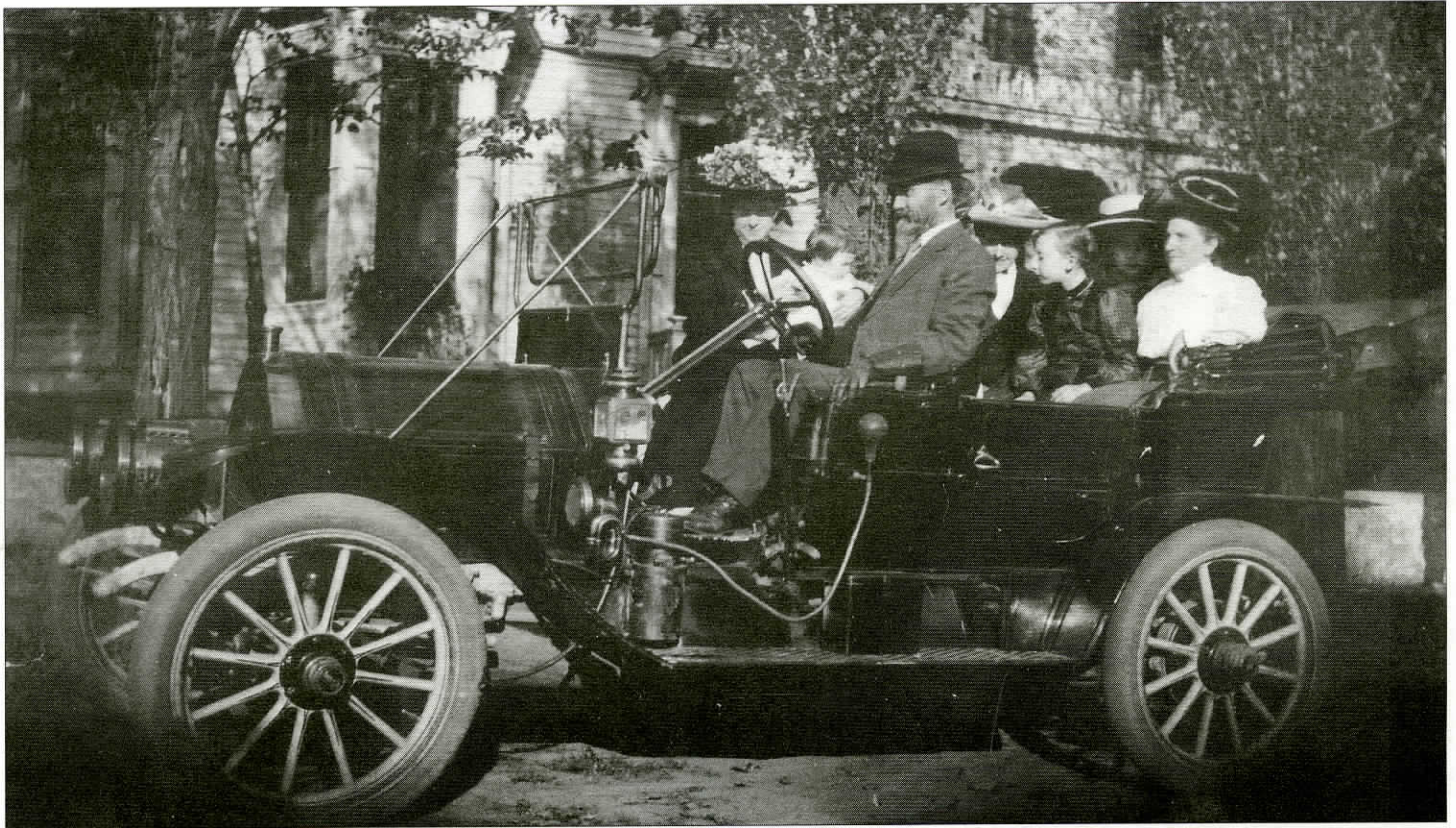
In 1936, Ellen Chandler Long's future husband proposed to her in the east parlor. On a later visit Mr. Long remembered Mom Jackson as a very clean, generous, and pleasant woman who washed the linens every day and was "always singing and mangling" sheets in the room off the kitchen. Another roomer noted that the Jacksons took good care of the house, making frequent repairs. When they redecorated the upstairs, they let the roomer choose new wallpaper for his rooms and enlarged the balcony so he could sunbathe.

In 1921 a young man arrived in Moscow to begin a long career as a history professor at the University of Idaho. When Frederic Church asked Mrs. Upham, wife of the University President where he might find a hotel in town, she suggested that he contact Mrs. Lousina Adair about renting a room. He moved into the Adair's home and remained there for the rest of his life, eventually buying the house from the Jacksons in 1941. As a renter, he paid \$20 per month for a suite of rooms on the south side. In turn, Dr. Church continued the practice of renting rooms to University students and faculty at that same twenty dollars per month. Although the house was rather run down, it was a flurry of activity. University groups met, with students participating in musical recitals and many literary discussions.

Many of the furnishings currently exhibited at the mansion are things from his parents' estate. Upon his death, Dr. Church's nieces and nephews were offered the opportunity to take these items. They declined, saying they really were a part of the house's history.



Top: Thanksgiving dinner for University of Idaho students, held at McConnell Mansion and hosted by Dr. Frederic Church in 1945, LCHS #1-5-149. Bottom: The house's fourth owner, Church photo file, LCHS.



Over the years friends had asked Dr. Church to consider bequeathing the house to Latah County and when he passed away in 1965 his handwritten will verified his choice that Latah County should own the house and it should be used for a meeting place and a museum. He asked that the Latah County Pioneer Association, the Moscow Historical Club, and "other cultural organizations working in harmony" be the beneficiaries.

Latah County Historical Society volunteers worked to get the house ready to be opened in 1971 as a museum. \$1500 was allocated for redecorating. They cleaned, painted, and papered. They solicited donations of wallpaper and paint from such local merchants as David's Department Store and Ward Paints for materials and labor. Grace Wicks headed the planning committee. Braided rugs were made by Matt Schumacher, a Moscow harness-maker, from unclaimed wool garments left at Carey's Cleaners. It was said that "Every man in town has old pants in a Schumacher rug." Donations of time, expertise and materials were made by many, including Rosemary Schull who replaced pieces in the front door as well as Dr. Adair's Tiffany-style lamp. Ione Adair donated money for the cause and reupholstering was done. Local people donated furnishings that had belonged to their Latah County pioneer families. On April 30, 1971 the Museum Association held its grand opening of the McConnell Mansion. The old governor's daughter Mary "Mamie" McConnell Borah sent a telegram of congratulations. Work still continues

today.

Enter the next generation of caregivers! In the years since, these precious "residents" of the house are truly a part of its long history. Jeanette, Steve and Christine Talbott have made a family affair of it. Mary Reed, Lillian Ottness, Phyllis and Duane Le-Tourneau, Keith Petersen, Lola Clyde, Cora Knott, Agnes Kottke, Barb and Bill Stellmon, Dee Rupe, E. Lee Murphy, Genevera Sloan, Nancy Ruth Peterson, and Gary Grove (Mr. McConnell Mansion himself), along with hundreds of others, honor our heritage and do their part to pay it forward. I can hear them all, every day, and carry them in my heart with gratitude always. ♪

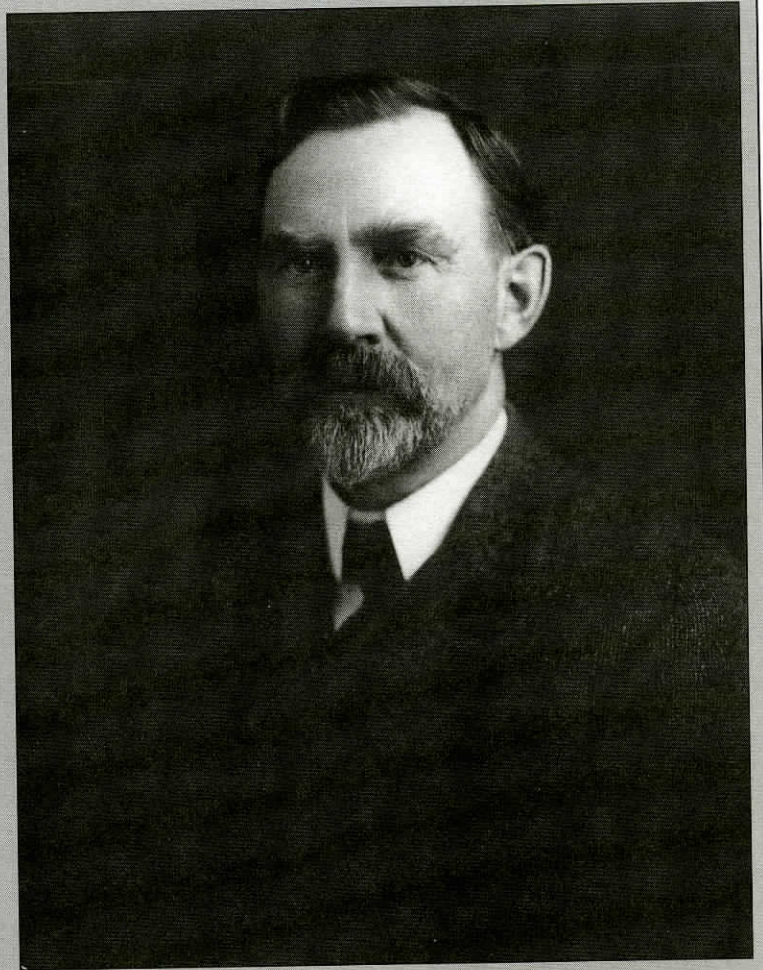
Photo: The Adairs cruising Moscow's Second Street in their family car, Adair photo file, LCHS.

The Adair Era at McConnell Mansion

In 1935, 110 South Adams transitioned ownership from the Adair Family to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jackson.

The Idahonian remarked upon the occasion:

For many years local residents have called the impressive structure on the corner of Adams and Second Streets "the Mansion," although it is not the largest of the Victorian homes in the Fort Russell Historic District. The tall white old mansion which changes hands in this sale, had been a Moscow landmark since most residents in the city can remember. When the house was built it was with extreme care and good workmanship, characteristic of the care of carpenters of "the old school." The ultimate in style and splendor of its day, the house was built of lumber brought here from Walla Walla in wagons. Every piece was straight-grained and properly seasoned, every joist, carefully fitted and tested.



Top: Portrait of Dr. William Adair, Adair photo file, LCHS. Bottom: The Adair family gathered to celebrate William and Lousina's 50th wedding anniversary, Adair photo file, LCHS.



The Gardens of McConnell Mansion, reported in *The Idahonian*, 1935

Carrie McConnell Bush: *My father had a deep well around 60 feet deep and all the neighbors came from all around to draw water from the well. When he fenced around the house and put up a windmill there were expressions of resentment from those who had made public use of the well.*

The father of the Ramstedt boys helped build the house and brought in and planted the willows and poplar trees. He carried them from the old Taylor place. At one time a double row of willows were set out along one side of the place.

Ione and Bernadine Adair: *Yes, Mother had a big round bed down here that she had cannas in and geraniums. But Father was very interested in snapdragons. And he had a long bed, oh, it was probably ten, fifteen feet long along the edge of the sidewalk that came from the upper yard down across, and that was his snapdragon bed. And anything happened to those snapdragons, you were in for an awful mess...The gardener brought in from the woods wild bleeding hearts, wild fern, and other small plants that he could get, and we had a wall that was possibly, oh, close to two feet high at the edge of the rosebed as it came into the under part of the garden. Our flower beds were star shape and crescent shape and little graveled paths that went down and around.*

Large box elders and walnut trees shaded the gardens where Mrs. McConnell and Mrs. Adair entertained many guests over the years. Ione remembered: *We's always watched an old woodpecker ever since we've been in that house...he's always had a nest in this first poplar tree out here. He always nested in that tree and you could hear him calling every morning, bright and early.*

*Left: Ione "Pinkie" Adair on her homestead, 49 Meadows Country, in winter 1909, Adair photo file, LCHS.
Right: Adair daughters "Pinkie," Bernadine and Lula with their mother Lousina, Adair photo file, LCHS.*



Ridin' The Bug in the Old Company Town Days

by Barbara Coyner

The story goes that when Potlatch, Idaho was a company town, parents hard-pressed to find childcare bought a round-trip ticket on "The Bug" and let their kids ride the rails all day. With tickets less than a dollar, the set-up was a real bargain. As Potlatch Lumber Company's self-propelled railcars ran between Palouse, Washington and Bovill, Idaho from 1933 to 1955, no doubt there were more than a few interesting tales about riders and cargo. Both the early Bug, a modified Studebaker, and later the classier "Potlatcher" built by Fairmont Railway Motors, were designed to carry passengers, mail and freight in a more economical fashion.

Latah County sisters Daisy Andreason Wunderlich and Maude Andreason Carlin, who have now passed on, recalled their days as flunkies at Camp 11 near Deary in a 1992 interview with me. Making the generous sum of \$60 per month, plus room and board, the teenaged sisters from Deary looked forward to hopping The Bug on their days off and riding to Bovill, a major shopping hub in that era. Living in the woods in a Marion shack, among 300 loggers, the girls savored their trips to town as they rode the railcar during the 30s. Both women recalled that Bovill had clothing stores, a hardware store, a drug store, a couple of hotels and a barber shop. As they returned to the camp, they often brought back records and other items for the young loggers who could seldom get to town themselves.

When the Potlatch High School Class of 1961 assembled in Princeton for a 60th reunion luncheon dur-

ing the fall of 2011, every one attending had a story about riding The Bug. Peggy Muck Lange lived in Onaway during her growing up years and remembered hiking over the hill to the Potlatch depot to catch a ride out to Princeton on warm summer days so she could join her friends at a favorite swimming hole. The group would swim all day and then Peggy would catch The Bug back to town as it did its return trip from Bovill. Lila Colvin McInerney, who grew up between Princeton and Harvard, said her mom packed the mail in from The Bug every day at Harvard. And Bev Clifford Miller recalls her dad catching The Bug at the Hatter Creek stop in Princeton so he could get to work in Potlatch.

The story of the Potlatch Lumber Company's early version of public transportation is really a story of three vehicles. Tom Burg, an avid rail buff who authored *The White Pine Route: The History of the Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway Company* (published in 2003), recounts that the WI&M Railway discontinued its daily passenger train service in 1932 under permission granted by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission. The new plan granted the company leeway to operate a steam train on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, with a motorcar picking up the slack on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Necessity being the mother of invention, WI&M car shop foreman Ernie Donovan tinkered with the first prototype, a red Model T Ford pickup truck with a small trailer. The vehicle, referred to as "The Bug," was so light and short-lived that it never rated a railroad equipment

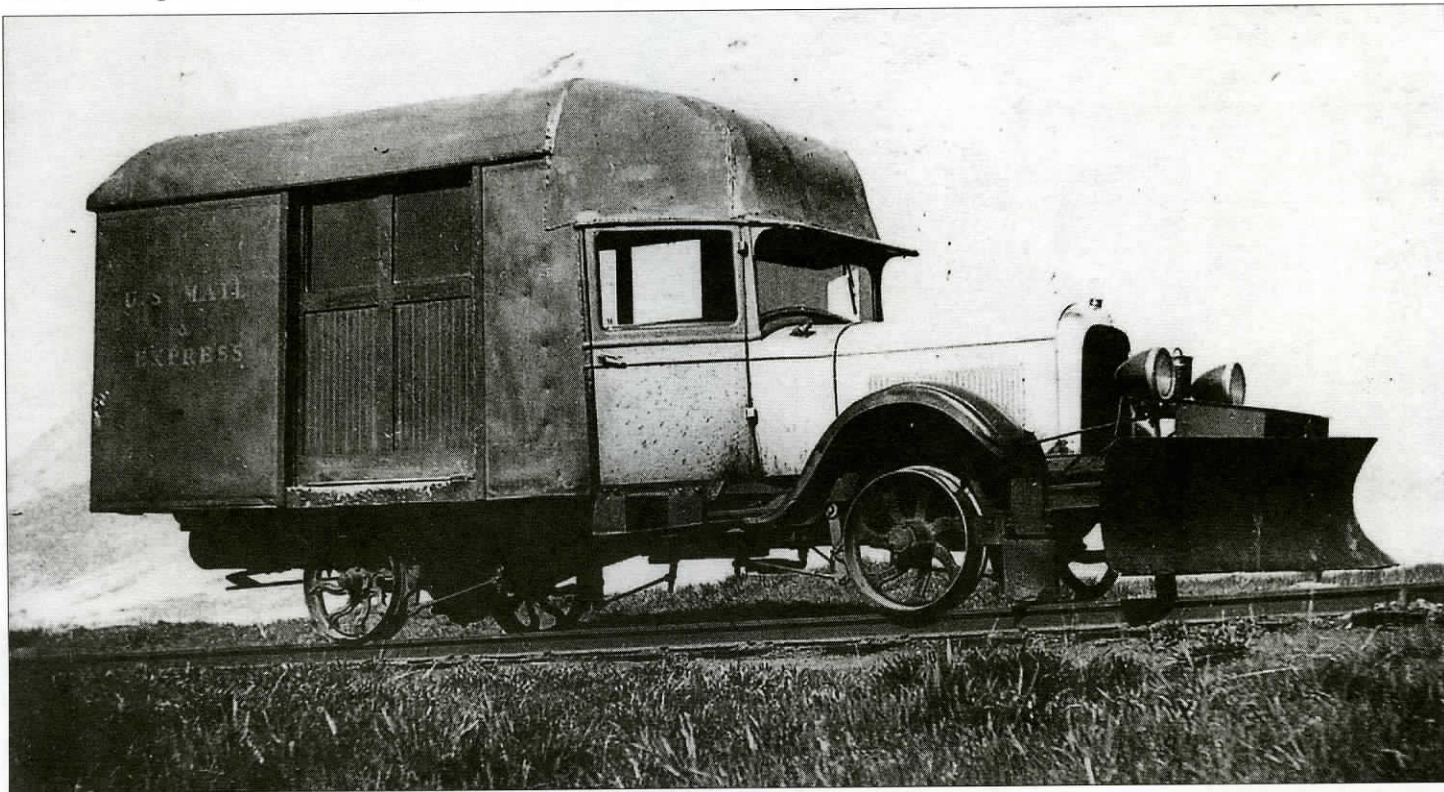
number, according to Burg's book. The Studebaker prototype came online in 1933, again picking up the moniker "The Bug." This Bug was painted army green, and could hold eight passengers, as well as freight and mail. The vehicle wasn't fancy and Walter Gamble, then manager of the railroad, had little to crow about when people chided him about his galloping goose. But it did get the job done, and by 1935, the old modified Studebaker had logged about 65,000 miles.

Railroad manager Gamble got his chance to hold his head a bit higher when the old Bug started to wear out in 1937, and corporate officials approved plans for a new set of wheels. The requiem for old #10, as the Studebaker was called, is recapped in the January 1938 issue of *The Family Tree*, published by Potlatch Lumber Company: "The result of this operation so far exceeded our fondest hopes that we continued to use it until the close of 1937, at which time it was in continuous service, making about 120 miles each day, handling passengers, mail and express," said Walter Gamble, noting that the early Bug had toted up 118,000 miles with the only serious maintenance being an engine rebore. Meanwhile Gamble was challenged to purchase a new Bug.

Contacting Fairmont Railway Motors in Fairmont, Minnesota, Gamble sought ideas and advice. Builders came up with a 110-horsepower Waukesha six-

cylinder gas engine, and a car that could seat 12, with seats upholstered in genuine leather. "The side walls are veneer to window height, and the top is finished in imitation leather," Gamble gushed in the January 1938 *Family Tree* article. "The floor is Idaho white pine and is covered in the passenger compartment with battleship linoleum." With a baggage compartment 14 ½ feet long, eight feet wide and 6 feet tall, cargo could be loaded easily through the doors on each side. Gamble continued, "The body is completely insulated with balsam wool to eliminate wheel noise. The windows and windshield are made of shatter-proof glass with mechanical type window regulators of sliding sash type." The new Bug, officially named the "Potlatcher," also boasted a water heater, front and rear headlights, an air horn, metal safety rail sweeps, a defrost fan, and front and rear windshield wipers. Overall length was 33 feet 11 inches, with colors painted similar to a Greyhound bus, at Gamble's request. Clearly Gamble found plenty to like in his new railcar. He contended it was the only one of its kind in the country, adding that other short lines soon would be clamoring for a similar car on the tracks.

Despite Gamble's enthusiasm, the new "Potlatcher" took time to manufacture. It was finally hauled into Potlatch aboard a flatcar in late December of 1937. A Fairmont official arrived on December 29,



Previous page: The Potlatcher at the WI&M depot in Palouse, c. 1940, shown loading mail and freight, including milk cans. The trestle and depot in the background were part of the Spokane & Inland Empire electric railway. This page: The second incarnation of The Bug, built on a Studebaker chassis, began running the Washington, Idaho & Montana railway in 1933. Powered by a six-cylinder engine, it hauled mail, passengers and express until its replacement by the custom "Potlatcher" in 1938. In its five years of service, it had covered 118,000 rail miles.

1937 to christen the new vehicle into service, and the brand spanking new car rolled out on its maiden voyage early in January of 1938. Railroad officials estimated that the car would serve them until 1945, which it did. In time, the car took on a slightly different paint job and lettering.

Local train engineer Claude Davis operated the "Potlatcher" for many years, keeping a schedule similar to that of the steam train. Rolling out of the Potlatch station in the morning, The Bug met the morning train at Palouse, trundled back through Potlatch and on to Bovill with a one-hour layover there, then back through Potlatch to Palouse to link up with the afternoon trains, and finally back to Potlatch for the night. No doubt hundreds of locals rode the car during this time, each tending to business, shopping or socializing via the convenient means of transportation. It must be remembered that three different rail lines came into Palouse, with frequent trains between Spokane and the Palouse. Thus, a person could ride to Palouse, link up with the train to Spokane and do a day of shopping or visiting without ever having to drive. Similar links were available between North Latah County and Moscow and Pullman, thanks to The Bug.

During its tenure, The Bug delivered bread from the Union Bakery to towns along the line, picked up cream bound for the Fairmount Creamery at Spokane, and also carried mail and cash to post offices and banks along the route. In Tom Burg's book, he recounts that of all the cargo Claude Davis carried up and down the line, his most hated parcels were those containing lutefisk bound for the large Scandinavian population settled at Deary. Stacked behind mail and other cargo, the renowned dry fish smell wafted throughout the car, advertising to all riders that there was lutefisk onboard. Only a seasoned Norwegian palate could savor such a pungent aroma.

Though The Bug served faithfully for many years, it went out less regally than it came in, thanks to discontinuation of government contracts for mail delivery. Without the contracts, passenger service couldn't pay the bills, so the familiar "Potlatcher" lapsed into service as a crew vehicle in 1955. Finally it was sent out to pasture as the 4-H concession stand at the ballpark. The renowned little railcar eventually went up in flames, leaving behind only fond memories in its ash heap of history. ☞



Northern Pacific self-propelled passenger car crossing the Palouse River in the 1950s. It was variously called the "Bug" or "Doodlebug."

THE POTLATCHER

REMEMBERED BY BILL THOMPSON



"In 1931 John & Lizzie Boller Thompson left their homestead in the Bull Mountains of Montana near Pompeys Pillar. They settled on the John Herral place near the Wellesley railroad stop where there is a bridge crossing the Palouse River on the now Wellesley Road. It was the North River Road. They moved there with our entire family: Bud, Fred, Wib, Lyle, Eva, Bill, Ted and Dale, all of them are well known to a lot of you.

Potlatch had not consolidated their school districts at this time, and Palouse being our shopping town, the older boys being out of school, with Eva, Bill, Ted and Dale too young to drive, they needed a way to Palouse schools. So John Thompson, Ed Spencer, Gabe Howell and Fred Deerkop, all needing to get their kids to school, went to Potlatch and talked to George Morshing about changing hours on the Potlatcher or "Bug" so it was to coincide with Palouse school hours. It

went to Palouse in the mornings with mail and passengers, then went to Bovill, then back to Palouse in the afternoon. All this was started in the fall of 1936. The "Bug" at that time was a 1927 Studebaker body [Potlatch Forest Industries] had made into a mail and passenger car. They changed the hours for the school year only.

The motor man for those first crews was Claude Davis, his substitutes were Jack Andres and Al Cowger. I think Al became the steady after Claude retired.

I will stand corrected on my recollections of history of the "Bug" and trains, all this was 70+ years ago. When the snow got too deep for the "Bug" they would put a passenger coach on the back of the freight train and pick us kids up.

The engineer of the freight train was Elmer Helm, fireman on the freight was Max Benson, brakemen and switchmen were Jack Andres, Al Cowger and George

George Benson. George Benson was headman, I think they called them brakemen. When the freight train hauled us to school, George was the conductor. He would put on a conductor's hat and a blue suit jacket for a uniform and collect our money, which was 10 cents one way. In the evening, we went to the Palouse Depot and bought tickets to return home. For awhile to begin with, we paid Claude Davis for both trips. Ralph Hughes, then Edna Saki, were the depot agents. Henry Saki was the car inspector, checking doors and hot wheel bearings on the freight cars.

The freight train came to Palouse every day or so, and the logging train once in awhile (I think at that time the logger engineer was Rags Howard, the fireman was Rex Benson, I didn't know the "brakies"?). I think it was 1938-1939, one or the other, PFI bought the "Potlatcher" from the Fairmont Carriage Works, Fairmont, Minnesota. The Thompsons were the first passengers to ride it.

There were farm crossings between Palouse and Wellesley. They were the Stringer, Howell, Spenser, Wellesley, Thompson, West crossings over the railroad tracks. The trains and "Bug" blew their whistles and horns at every crossing. Elmer Helm blew the steam whistle at every crossing, loud and long. We could hear him at every crossing when he left Palouse. Gene Walters has the horn off the "Bug." He has promised to hook air to it and blow it for me.

It was probably the spring and summer of 1942 that all of the Japanese were to leave Potlatch for Internment. They would ride the "Bug," family after family to Palouse, then catch the train to Spokane to be sent away. They never returned. As far as I know this was voluntarily; no escort that I ever saw.

A lot of times Elmer would let us kids ride to the turntable and help turn the engine and coal car around. It was round and had big handles on either end to push. We did it also for the "Bug" until they made us stop.

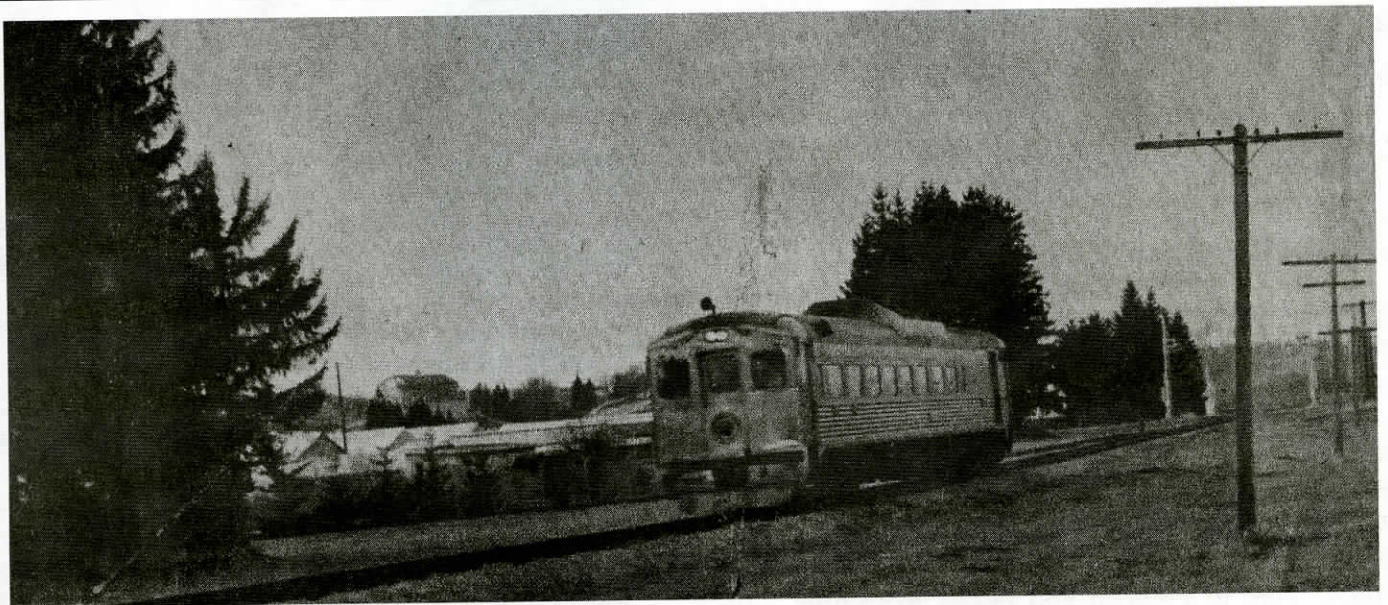
The school kids that rode the "Bug" to Palouse Schools were: Bill Lazelle, rode from Potlatch, Darlene Moore and Melvin Taggart from Taggartville, Orpha West, Eva, Bill, Ted and Dale Thompson, Joan, Larry, Suzanne Spencer, Barbara Statt, Bud Howell, Ada Mae Howell, Les Howell, Sally, Loren "Wren" Deerkop, Eugene "Peanut" Schell, Duane, Dwana and little sister, Walter Berry. All of us lived along the Palouse River and at school we were called the "River Rats."

I can remember only three other riders that used the "Bug." They were Eunice Bidlake, John Ingle or Engle, and a small bodied salesman that wore dark overcoat and derby hat. He was some kind of salesman that went to Potlatch once in awhile. Those older Thompson boys would get Larry Spencer to tip his derby hat. No reaction from him.

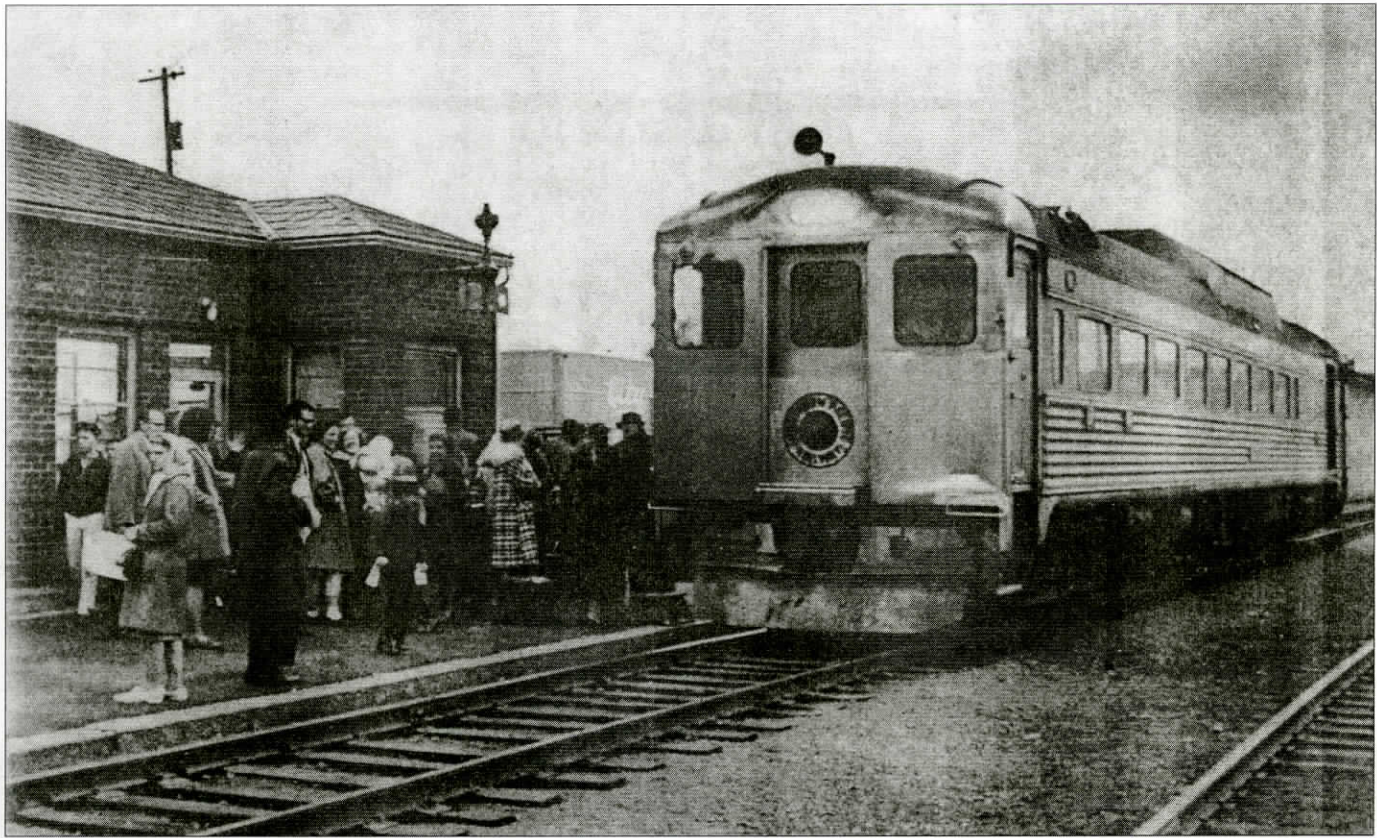
All of this started in 1936 and ended when Potlatch consolidated their school district. I think around 1948-50. Idaho students from Palouse and Garfield went to Potlatch in 1950.

Claudine Atkison is Claude Davis' daughter. Maybe she can tell you more. She has the original of this picture of "The Potlatcher".

Editor's Note: This article appeared previously in the Summer 2011 Potlatch Historical Society newsletter, with thanks to Janice Palmer for the transcription. Mr. Thompson passed away soon after the piece was released.



Newspaper photograph of the Northern Pacific passenger "bug" on its final run to Lewiston in 1966. Here the "Bug" nears Moscow's Line Street, approaching the West Eighth Street NP depot.



Lewiston Tribune, March 6, 1966: "This was the scene at the Moscow depot when the passenger train stopped there Monday enroute from Lewiston to Spokane. The passenger load on the train's last trip was the biggest since "the bug" was put into service 15 years ago. A total of 131 passengers boarded the train at Lewiston, and since the car's seating capacity is only 96, some had to sit in the aisle, some stood, and other used metal chairs set up in the storage compartment next to the engine."

RAIL FANS RIDE LAST "BUG" RUN

Passenger service on the "Potlatcher" concluded in the nineteen fifties, but the Northern Pacific "bug" served the Inland Northwest until 1966.

Fifteen local persons, many of them local railroad buffs anxious to participate in an historic event in local history, joined some 125 other persons who jammed the Northern Pacific's passenger "bug" on its final trip to Lewiston and return yesterday.

The self-propelled diesel car, which has been in continuous operations through Moscow twice daily since 1951, was discontinued by the railroad after approval was given by the Interstate Commerce Commission to discard the "bug" because of general losses created by the service.

Thus, for the first time since 1898, the area is without daily passenger train service of any kind from Spokane to Lewiston.

While the normal capacity of the "bug" is 96 persons, the unit was crammed with over 130 on its final run and many persons were armed with cameras to record the conclusion of the service. Stops along the route were marked with interested person [sic] ... who wanted to be on hand as the service's end was marked.

Local NP officials said no changes in personnel will be noted here although the depot will be closed on weekends in the future. A part-time employe [sic] on weekends will be the only one to feel the pinch of the discontinuance of service through Moscow.

— "Moscow Mirror," March 1, 1966

Batter Up!

America's Baseball Epidemic in Latah County

By Daniel Crandall



Introduction

Baseball was more than a game in early Latah County. It was a consuming, ubiquitous pastime that dovetailed like nothing else with the needs of the people of our towns and countryside alike. Based on its cultural importance, and the wealth of colorful material available, the subject of baseball hereabouts is worthy of a book. Perhaps this modest article can serve as someone's beginning.

The reminiscences shared herein were largely drawn from the rich oral history collection at Latah County Historical Society's Centennial Annex. Baseball is a recurrent subject in these hundreds of transcribed interviews.

The Kennedy Ford Score Book

It's a Wright & Ditson Victor Official Base Ball Score Book, the Kennedy Ford baseball team's scorer's record for the years 1926 through 1929. Its binding was a bright red once, but has weathered to a dull hue. The cover has detached from the binding, the corners are beyond dog-eared, and its pages suffused with Palouse dust. One day, in June or July of 1927, the only game in the whole score book recorded in ink rather than pencil, it rained, leaving a pattern of black splotches over the pages. It shows every effect of its years of service. A precious part of our historical society archives, this score book opens a splendid window into Latah County's experience with what has been described as "an epidemic of baseball" that took hold nation-wide in the 1880s, and lasted through the early decades of the twentieth century.

The Beginnings of Baseball

Baseball had its beginnings in centuries-old English folk games with names like rounders, stool ball, and cat and dog. The earliest known mention of "baseball" in the United States was a 1792 Pittsfield, Massachusetts ordinance banning the playing of the game within 80 yards of the town meeting house. In most early versions the infield was square, with no foul lines or fixed positions on the field. Eight to fifteen men - and sometimes as many as fifty - played

on each side. Such chaotic early rules gradually evolved into a more standardized set of conventions. A diamond with foul lines was adopted, and nine players for each side, and the length of the game limited to nine innings. A one out rule was changed to three outs to allow more sustained play. As early as the 1830s teams began to adopt these rules, and by the 1850s the game was being transformed. The first team to play baseball under modern rules was the New York Knickerbockers, founded on September 23, 1845.

Baseball was largely developed on the east coast, and traveled west with our nation. Thousands of forty-niners brought the game to California, and some of them took it north to the new gold finds in the Pacific Northwest, including those in Idaho. In the 1860s, countless soldiers on both sides of the Civil War encountered the game for the first time, and took it home to their communities. (The earliest settlements of Latah County, such as Viola and Genesee established in the late 1860s, had their share of Civil War veterans.) However it arrived, baseball was the unrivalled king of sports in Latah County during the late 1800s and first half of the 20th century. At its height, baseball was played in Latah County at every level, from pickup games on the farm, to loosely organized community teams, to semi-professional teams fielded by larger towns such as Kendrick, Potlatch, and Moscow.

Previous Page: Juliaetta baseball team, c. 1914. Note the score keeper on the left holding his score book. LCHS photo.

The Perfect Diversion

It was the perfect rural diversion, an ideal antidote for lives characterized by hard work and the uncertainties of farming and the woods. At its irreducible level, a fairly flat piece of ground plus a bat and a ball were all that were needed to start a game. As Frank Brocke recalled, "There was baseball in the backyard, in the cow lots, and in the timothy fields." There was baseball in the towns and logging camps of north Latah County as well. Wherever it was played the priorities were clear: work first, then play. Axel Anderson, walking boss and foreman for the Potlatch Lumber Company recalled that, "There were no practice, you know. They come right off from work, and went playing ball, and kept on working until the next game again, and put on a glove and played a ball game. No practice."

Equipment and fields were often rudimentary. Remembering Cornwall area baseball games, Eugene Settle recalled that, "Sometimes a kid'd get there and knock a home run. Most of the time you'd get out there in the weeds and lose the ball!" Describing a field in the Bovill area, probably the one down by the Blackwell Mill, Axel Anderson remembered, "It was a pretty good diamond. Course every time they knocked it across the creek it was a home run." Of the officiating, Settle remembered, "We didn't have no bat zone. If it was as high as your head and it went across the plate, why he called it a strike! If it was right on the ground and it didn't hit the ground and bounce over the catcher's head, why, and he caught it, that was a strike. High or low, it didn't matter too much." None of that mattered; it didn't diminish the fun one bit.

Before the 1880s and the arrival of the railroads in Latah County, the range of competition was limited by the practical distances that could be achieved on foot, on horseback, and horse drawn wagon. Norla Callison remembered that, "women and kids would go in the hack, and the young bucks, the baseball players, would have a horse." The railroads greatly increased the scope of competition. The Moscow or Potlatch teams, for example, could now vie with teams from distant Spokane or Lewiston. The Kennedy Ford team's score book from the 1920s reveals games with Johnson, Colfax and Albion, Washington, as well as Viola, Princeton, Palouse, Troy, Deep Creek, and Deary...all practical by rail.

The baseball season began in the spring, as early as April, and continued until the harvest, as late as September. Sunday was the agreed-on day for baseball, the day of the week when most citizens were likely to have a measure of leisure time. Sunday baseball did not preempt church. Players could still attend



George Edwards (left) and Hubert Walker of the Cornwall Baseball Club in 1916. This club was disbanded during World War I, but reorganized after the men came back from the war. Molly West Walker made their red and white uniforms. Photo courtesy of Bruce Asplund and Troy Historical Society.

services at their chosen house of worship, whether Lutheran, Methodist, or Presbyterian, but ministers often speeded up their sermons to finish in time for the first pitch, or excused players early for away games. God speed our valiant players! But playing ball on Sunday was not without controversy. Bill Hickman talked about the early 1900s, when his great grandfather Harris, a retired Methodist minister, would "come down (to Genesee) every Sunday and sit on the back porch and watch the ballgame and smoke his corn cob pipe and give the folks the fits for playing ball on Sunday! But he didn't miss a day anyway to come down." In Elk River, zealous clergy managed to close the movie theatre on Sunday (driving people to the opera house in Bovill, to the dismay of the Elk River business community), and aimed their disapproval at baseball. J. Les Clark recalled that, "They even tried to stop baseball on Sunday, but that didn't go over." Apparently you could close the movie theatre, but baseball was one rock that wouldn't roll.

Baseball in early Latah County was an immensely popular diversion, but games also represented important social opportunities. Team mates and their opponents on rural teams were often neighbors, life-long friends, or family. When the Kennedy Ford team played "In. Tel." (Inland Telephone?) on June 19, 1927, five of their nine teammates shared the same last name. Stepping to the plate that day were brothers Peter, Herbert, Hugo, Tony, and Sebastian "Bush" Walser from a large Potlatch area farming family. It's easy to imagine their idle conversation on a hot, Palouse summer day. Eugene Settle recalled that, "the farmers they'd hook up the old hack and team and come over and watch (us) kids play ball. And they get a chance to visit with all the neighbors, too. They had about as much fun out of it as we did."

Baseball games were inevitably part of the schedule of events at community Fourth of July celebrations, and at other special occasions. On May 27, 1910, the Deary News announced that, "On May 29 an excursion train will travel to the last spike being

driven at the Milwaukie Road connection to the WI&M. In the afternoon will be a ball game between Potlatch & Bovill, the deciding game of the series between them." Baseball was a great draw, combining action, controversy, partisanship, and a savored chance to sit and talk.

Walt Benscoter recalled that, "Baseball (wa)s the only game people played." Because of the limitations of early communication and travel in Latah County, the only sports most people followed were local. Newspapers like the Kendrick Gazette and Genessee News had no sports page, and the only sport reliably reported on was baseball. Only a national event of historic proportions would reach early Latah County citizens. (An example was the racially charged "Fight of the Century" between champion Jack Johnson and James Jeffries on July 4, 1910, when organizers of the Moscow July 4th celebration promised to share telegraphed news of the fight in progress.) What mattered was local baseball, and it mattered a lot. Sometimes perhaps a bit too much.



Kendrick ball park, c. 1924. Located downriver on the outskirts of town. LCHS photo.

High Stakes and Hard Feelings

"There wasn't no entertainment on the farm. Neither was there in town.

Generally had a ball game on Sunday. When Kendrick and Juliaetta played they always had a fight with it."

- Otto Schupfer



Not every game was a jocular, relaxed affair. Rivalries formed between communities, or even across town. Passions ran high, often escalating to violence. The Kendrick versus Juliaetta rivalry was hardly the only one in Latah County. In his invaluable reminiscence, *Moscow at the Turn of the Century*, Homer David recalled that in the 1890s Moscow had two baseball teams, one from the east side of town, and another from the west side. He recounted that, "intense rivalry prevailed, even though these were just so-called kids' teams. Many times, games ended in brawls." The woods of north Latah County were particularly wild and wooly in this regard. Rivalry or no, brawling appeared to represent the final inning of many games. Describing Bovill area games, Axel Anderson was quite matter of fact: "Afterwards, that's when they had the fight." Eugene Settle also remembered this, "Up in Princeton and Harvard - they used to come to blows. Get up there and those wood rats, you know, and they'd get up

there and they'd get their baseball and moonshine mixed together there and they'd get in some pretty wild times sometimes!"

Rivalry wasn't the only thing stoking high and hard feelings, there was also money. Gambling in the form of personal bets was widely associated with baseball of the era, but for the better town teams there were purses to be won, and appearance payments and gate receipts on the line. This was serious money. Particularly remunerative was Troy's July 4th observance in 1926, which "included a baseball tournament with a purse of \$400 to the winner. The Kendrick Beanpickers beat Uniontown 12-9 and collected the purse. Genesee took \$200 and the Uniontown team also collected \$200." At Moscow's 4th of July celebration in 1911, the Moscow and Palouse teams played two games, one on the 3rd and another on the 4th, and each team walked away with \$175. We'll never know what other money might have been on the line, but it was a nice sum regardless.

Potlatch team, circa 1912, poses for a photo after their triumph over Bovill, 4 - 3. LCHS photo.

The intense desire to win, and money on the line, motivated teams to stack the deck. W. J. Gamble recounted his recruitment to Potlatch Lumber Company for his railroading skills, "And by the way," he says, "Do you know anything about baseball?" 'Yeah...'. He says, "Well we got four baseball teams in Potlatch. That's not essential to this job, but it would help a lot." The mill at Elk River would hire University of Idaho student athletes to work during the summer vacation. Axel Anderson said, "As long as the mill ran, I know, all them students from the university come up there and they took a dozen (and) put 'em to work in the mill...so that made a pretty good team." According to Axel, Elk River's team would throw in with Bovill and together they could beat Potlatch, and that was saying something.

Some teams were semi-professional, mostly locals playing for free with a few paid skill positions. Pitchers were the most likely to be paid, and the most in demand. Axel Anderson remembered that, "The pitching was the worst (hardest) to get somebody." This was an era when spit balls were the norm, and a bottle cap pinned to the pitcher's belt was a handy way to scuff the ball. A big curve ball could dominate a game. Harry Sampson remembered Moscow's minor league team around 1906, "... they competed with Pullman, Colfax, Palouse, Lewiston (and) the towns around here. And all the players with the exception of the pitchers and the catcher were unpaid." Feelings ran high between the Fix Ridge and Juliaetta folks and their rivals, Kendrick. According to Otto Schupfer, Juliaetta had the better


baseball team at one point, "Of course then, they (Kendrick) started in hiring outsiders, their pitchers ...Kendrick had a little more money, they got a little the best..." Otto was so disgusted at this turn of events that he quit going to the games. Intense town rivalries and money stirred the pot and brought in the ringers, but for Aspendale, Kennedy Ford, and countless other farm teams, none of that mattered. They loved and needed the game itself.

The Ninth Inning

In 1900 almost 50 percent of the labor force in the United States still earned a living from the soil. That proportion shrank in each succeeding census until now less than 2 percent of the labor force is engaged in agriculture. The 20th century's rapid development of large, efficient farm machinery eliminated a lot of jobs, and an expanding economy created other opportunities for farm boys. During the 1920s the automobile era exploded. Henry Ford's Model T and paved roads led to an era of great mobility, spelling the end of rural Latah County towns like Howell, Lenville, and so many more. Country schools were consolidated in towns, and school sports became the new focus of small town pride. Radio and ultimately television provided a way to follow sports without hitching up the hack and team or cranking the car. Baseball is, of course, still around, but it will never again mean what it did to the people of Latah County in its heyday. ♪



The Moscow Cubs, shown here in the 1920s, were one of Latah County's better youth teams. Frank Brocke recalled fondly the time that his team, pulled together from Troy, Kendrick, and American Ridge, beat the Cubs. Otto Eichner threw a wicked curve ball, and "he had 'em (the Cubs) scared to death." LCHS photo.



Deary News
August 6, 1909
Front Page

WAS AN AWFUL
GAME OF
BALL

Probably the most interesting game of baseball ever played in Latah County was pulled off on the local diamond Sunday between the heavy lumber jacks of the jammer crew and the local sports. A small but deeply interested crowd witnessed the affair. Indeed the event was worth a bigger attendance and no doubt the bleachers would have been lined had the game been duly advertised. Up to the third inning the score stood 3 to 1 in favor of Donovan's leaguers and all anticipated a tight score, when the locals went all to pieces and the lumber jacks started a merry-go-round which lasted until the free silver slogan was reached, when Deary got her innings, when Ray Drury the heaviest batter this sector has ever known, landed the sphere under the sidewalk at Davis drug store three blocks away, bringing in four scores. The locals regained courage at this junction and shoved the finals up to 10 to 16 when the game stopped on account of the supper bell. Big Leaguer Donovan's spit balls were one of the features of the game. Other notable stunts: Doc Grannis' phenomenal pickups; Walt Peterson's hundred yard dash after a grounder; innumerable big hits and double plays by the jammer team; Doctor Worthington's swift decisions. Casualties, one jaw belonging to young Grannis, catcher, knocked back several inches by a warm foul.



Top: A player on Moscow's 1905 team. Unfortunately, his name has faded on the photograph. LCHS photo.

Center: The Genesee News of June 27, 1913 announced the Pioneer Picnic planned for July 4, 1913, sponsored by the Genesee Baseball Association. It featured former governor William J. McConnell presenting "another of his famous pioneer speeches."

Bottom: Roger Asplund of the Troy Town Team readies for a game during the 1940s. Photo courtesy of Bruce Asplund and Troy Historical Society.

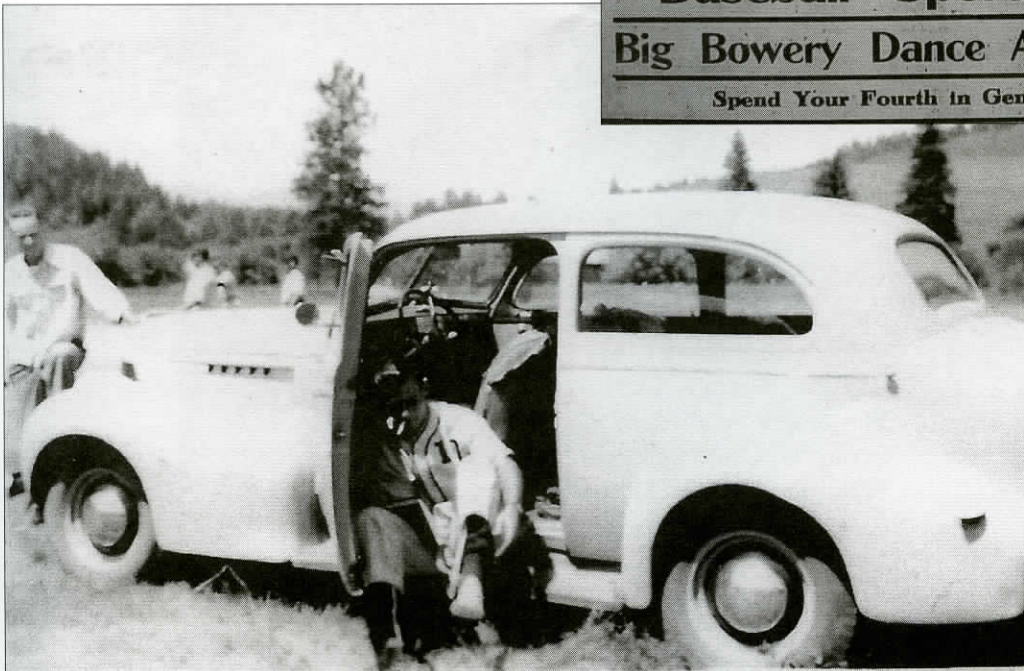
BIG PIONEER PICNIC JULY 4TH

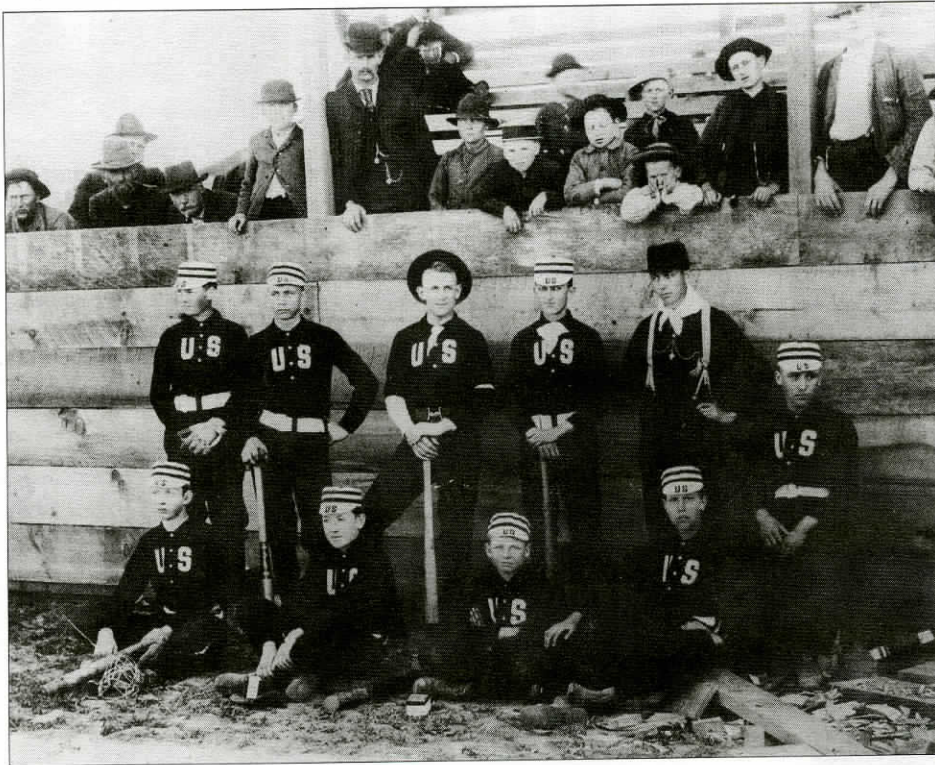
**Speaking in City Park by
EX - GOVERNOR W. J. McCONNELL**

Baseball - Sports - Basket Dinner

Big Bowery Dance Afternoon and Evening

Spend Your Fourth in Genesee and Have a Good Time





A Moscow team from the early 1890s. LCHS photo.

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Ione Adair and Carrie McConnell Bush were great friends, and both called Moscow's 110 South Adams Street "home." This issue of *Latah Legacy* celebrates McConnell Mansion upon the 125th anniversary of its construction.

Photo from the Adair collections at Latah County Historical Society

