

Potlatch Historical Society

Summer 2008

PHS Marks 10th Anniversary!

Celebration Breakfast

Some of the members of the Potlatch Historical Society gathered at Irene Bain's Laird House Bed and Breakfast in January to celebrate PHS's 10th year. Pictured at left, front row, left to right, Judi Rohn, Bonnie Rohn, Ruth O'Reilly, Carol Haddock; back row, left to right, Barb Coyner, Irene Bain, Lindy Seip Jack Coyner, Janice Palmer.



Inside this issue:

President's Message	1
Riverside Recollections	2
PHS Roots	3
June is Dairy Month	3
Life on the Farm	4

PHS Mission Statement: Preserve and promote an interest in the rich history of North Latah Co. rural communities. Contribute to the location, preservation and display of items of historical importance in the Potlatch area for the enjoyment of the general public. Publish periodic newsletters, conduct annual events and provide historic memorabilia which further knowledge and interest in the history of the area.

Note from the President: . . .

Since our last newsletter, Potlatch Historical Society members have been busy working on a number of projects related to the history of Potlatch. Carol Haddock is writing proposals for historical interpretation markers to be placed across from the Potlatch millsite along Highway 6. Bonnie Rohn, Judi Rohn and Lindy Seip continue to market our PHS memorabilia, and Janice Palmer keeps excellent track of our finances. Meanwhile, one of our most active members, Ruth O'Reilly, has moved to Clark House in Moscow so we plan to have some of our future meetings there. Barb Coyner, our newsletter editor, features Ruth's reminiscences about Riverside in this issue.

We're now working on new "History Day" displays to be featured in the restored Potlatch depot during the speeder ride weekend (July 12-13) and Potlatch Days celebration (July 19). Along the way, we're continuing to work with the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway History Preservation Group to explore further renovations to the depot interior for use by both groups. We've also gone on a search for remaining "Company Town" books by Keith Petersen, since the book is now out of print, with no plans for reprinting.

As you can see, it's a busy time for us all, and we hope you'll join us for our "History Day" displays in July, and consider becoming more active in PHS. You're welcome to join the fun!

Jack Coyner, President

Riverside Recollections ... *Dancing at Potlatch's favorite nightspot*



Ruth O'Reilly shows off some of her favorite photos

Remember Riverside? Ruth O'Reilly does. As a youngster, she attended one of the first dances there. The daughter of George and Bertha Gregory, she and her older siblings Geneva and Earl enjoyed extra privileges because their father worked at the snack bar, which got them free dance tickets and a sandwich during the evening.

"I loved that place," Ruth recalls of Riverside. "It had a kitchen and was a six-sided building with windows that dropped down like flaps. They had dances there every week. One of the bands that played there was Tommy Dorsey. They were supposed to send a full band, but it was a stormy night, so when they got there, it was only Tommy Dorsey and two others."

Ruth grew up dancing, and her dad, a farmer, and her mom, a postal employee, were known as good dancers. Her brother Earl later became a dance instructor in California. And Ruth met her husband Jim at a dance at Riverside. When the place later became a skating rink, Jim also taught Ruth to skate at Riverside.

"There was all kinds of entertainment there," Ruth recalls, naming Tex Ritter as another famous performer at Riverside (Johnny Cash was also known to have played there). "There was a lot of baseball, too."

According to Ruth, Joe Tuft and Ray Hansen started the first dance hall at Kennedy Ford. When that hall burned, the business pair rebuilt a bigger hall at Riverside. That building flooded twice as the river rose, and the second time, the hall was washed off its foundation. Once repaired, it became a skating rink.

Ruth especially recalls the fun of the three-day 4th of July grange events that went on at Riverside. One year, nearby Indian tribes came and another year there was an amateur rodeo, along with baseball and footraces. And of course there was dancing. In those days, it was strictly ballroom — fox trot, drag and waltz — but "no jitterbug," according to Ruth. Because Ruth's mom was the bookkeeper for the special events, Ruth got in on the dancing action and the attendance statistics, as well. "One night there were 450 couples," Ruth remembers. "That's 900 people!"

Because Riverside wasn't far from the Kennedy Ford Grange, the two places functioned as popular social spots for area families. Ruth recalls evenings at the grange with the same fondness she reserves for Riverside, recalling "In those days, there were no babysitters, so when we were little, Mom and Dad put us in bunks there [at the grange] and wrapped us up in coats. When it was time to go home, they wrapped us up in blankets so we'd stay warm. We had an old touring car with open sides in those days."

Married to Jim for just under 50 years, Ruth and Jim did their last serious dancing on a Caribbean cruise. Ruth retired as a bookkeeper from Bennett Lumber in 1981, and counts her dancing days as some of life's best memories. These days she lives at Clark House in Moscow.

"We were poor as church mice in those days, but I'll bet we had more fun than 95 percent of the kids now days," she says.

Out of town PHS members might not know that the Kennedy Ford Grange was demolished in the fall of 2007. Eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the 1906 grange building ironically came down at the same time that the Potlatch depot was being restored. Both buildings were of the same era with the lumber, flooring and bead board paneling all being milled at Potlatch around the same time.

PHS Beginnings By Carol Haddock

The Potlatch Historical Society had its roots in a couple of other community interests – a library and a community development organization. The community had expressed its desire to see its unique history preserved when the Scenic 6 Community Development Council formed in 1993 as part of the Idaho Gem groups. An interest in building a larger library in Potlatch also began that year. I joined a group interested in planning the library and worked to raise funds to match a Federal library construction grant. The Library District had an opportunity to apply for the \$250,000 grant but it needed to be matched.

The Scenic Six Community Development Council took the project on as a goal. Carmine Lockwood, District Ranger for the Palouse Ranger District, and Jack Coyner, a local Forest Service employee, also searched for matching grants. The community wanted a building that was more than just a library. It would include computer space, a meeting room, community accessible restrooms, and display space for historical information.

As time passed it became apparent that a historical preservation group could expand grant opportunities. At the same time it was decided that the latest technology should be used, and John Hartman, a local website builder, joined the group to provide the computer expertise. One evening in the spring of 1998, Carmine and Barb Lockwood, Jack and Barb Coyner, John and Sally Perrine-Hartman, Suzanne Lay, Monte Wilson and Jim and Carol Haddock met over supper to form the Potlatch Historical Society.

The Historical Society held its first “History Day” in November at the High School gym. In time, Historical Society members and Potlatch Corporation officials met and agreed that a CD of historical photos would be produced. PHS members would choose the pictures and distribute the CD’s and Potlatch Corporation would pay for the production. Historical photo CD’s were produced in 1999 and 2000. CD sales gave the new historical society operating funds it needed. The library opened in January of 2000 and the PHS members continue to provide historical photos and memorabilia for the displays. The Potlatch Historical Society is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year and it is a great feeling of accomplishment for those of us who have watched it grow. Thank you to all the PHS members who have worked to preserve the Potlatch history.



History buffs make history PHS had its first meeting at Barb and Jack Coyner’s Princeton home. Pictured, clockwise from left: Sally Hartman, Carol Haddock, Jack Coyner, Barb Coyner, John Hartman, Carm Lockwood, Barb Lockwood, Suzanne Lay Qualmann, Monte Wilson.

DISAPPEARING BARNS



The historic Lindsey barn burned to the ground late in 2007. Current owners Liz and Jay Lusby were restoring the round-roof barn located south of Potlatch just off Highway 95. As part of the restoration, they had already reroofed the building and were getting ready to do further structural work.

It has been pointed out that Latah County has an unusually high amount of barns still standing, but those barns are fast disappearing and with them, the rich stories of farm life on the Palouse. Photographer Blake Ballard is currently focusing on the historic barns on the Palouse and has collages and CD’s available for sale. Contact him at: 208-882-6120 for further details.

Life Down on the Farm by Bonnie Curtis Rohn

One of the things I remember about my childhood was time spent with my mother on Saturday mornings delivering milk, cream, eggs and cottage cheese to customers in the City of Palouse. This was the way we purchased groceries that we needed weekly. We also traded eggs to West's Grocery Store in Palouse and delivered cream to the Palouse Creamery.

Growing up on a farm was a priceless experience one never forgets. I remember butchering chickens by the dozen, plucking feathers, gutting the chickens and cutting them up. I wasn't allowed to crop the heads off as my aim was bad and nobody trusted me with the ax (just kidding).

My girlfriend (Connie Largent McBride) and I decided to enter the Dairy Foods Demonstration contest held through the 4-H program, with the state winner awarded a trip to a national gathering of winners (in the 4-H program) in of all places – Chicago. We decided to make cottage cheese and then a lime jello salad using the cottage cheese.

Now to make the cottage cheese: milk would be set out for a day or two (depending on the temperature in the house) and allowed to clabber (sour). This was usually done in a granite kettle or stoneware bowl, then when soured, you would cut the solid milk in squares and dice into small pieces. To set the curd, you would pour boiling water over the cut-up milk and stir gently until small curds would appear. This process (cooking) would involve carefully pouring off the water and replacing it with more hot water until the curd was the desired texture. The next step was to set the curd by rinsing with cold water until the water would run clear. Once cooled, you added a small amount of cream, salt and pepper and enjoyed, but not for our salad. Once cooled and drained well, we would add the cottage cheese to the lime jello (partially set) and drained crushed pineapple, and then fold in whipped cream and cool until set.

Well, Connie and I did great with our demonstration and won the state Dairy Foods demonstration contest finals held at the University of Idaho Home Ec. Building. However we were awarded — wristwatches, not a trip to Chicago, because there were two of us and there was only enough money for one trip! Oh well, what was a trip to Chicago for a pair of girls from Potlatch except the dream of a lifetime? But I still have my wristwatch as a keepsake.



PRESERVING THE UNIQUE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF POTLATCH, IDAHO

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Potlatch Historical Society
Officers

Jack Coyner, President
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Lindy Seip, Secretary
Janice Palmer, Secretary
Barb Coyner, News Editor

Annual Dues: \$20/Household
Meetings:
2nd Saturday of each month, 9:30 am
Potlatch City Hall

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