

# Potlatch Historical Society Newsletter

~Summer 2014~

“Preserving the Unique Heritage of Idaho’s Historic  
Company Town”



Potlatch Historical Society  
P.O. Box 5  
Potlatch, ID 83855

#### Officers

Karen Rohn, President  
Halette Meyer, Vice-President  
Bonnie Rohn, Secretary  
Janice Palmer, Treasurer  
Karen Bizak-Marr, News Editor

Annual Dues: \$30/Household  
Lifetime Member \$125

Potlatch Museum - Located in  
City Hall

City Hall Hours: 10:30 am -  
5:30 pm

(Closed 1-2pm for lunch)

For Information, call City Hall  
at:  
208-875-0708

See us on Facebook at  
“Potlatch Historical Society”  
or at  
[potlatchhistoricalsociety.org](http://potlatchhistoricalsociety.org)



Ron Nirk

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It’s that time of year when we are all busy. Finding time is increasingly important as technology speeds us up. We need to slow down. Take note of things, and people, around us. Find enjoyment in the small matters. Savor and appreciate.

Happily, this “slowing down” is catching on. Folks understand that the history of Potlatch isn’t just in buildings, but in the small moments that make up daily life. As proof of this, PHS has had many gifts recently given to us: A handmade miniature farm was donated and delivered by the children of Glen & Lee Nagle. Carol Rueppel Kraut dropped off a 1941 phonebook. A vintage panorama shot of the Freeze Community was given to us by the Zimmerman families. The family of Dorothy and Denny Knott gifted us an original Hutchinson photograph of the Potlatch Mill site. Dave and Kendria Cada contributed mid-century high school items to us. The Potlatch Historical Society is lucky to have such large hearted friends.

Recently, however, time has taken one of our most giving friends. Many of you are probably familiar with Ron Nirk. He and his wife, Janie, have lived north of Potlatch for as long as I can remember. His family made a huge mark on our community in the

lumber and farming industries. We lost Ron on June 14. Ron and Janie were huge cheerleaders for the Potlatch Historical Society. When they found out a few years ago that I planned to paint a large historical mural on the Scenic Six Depot, they gave a generous check to make sure it came to fruition.

I spent a fair amount of time with Ron over the years. He had a fondness for getting a little attention. When he, Janie and I went bike riding one day, Ron found some baling twine on the road, about fifteen feet of it. He tied it to the back of his bike so that he had a long, farmer-type streamer following behind him. And I filled his shoes full of cat food a couple times. Moments like these will be with me forever. I am so thankful that I took the time to “just be” in the moment. I, along with the PHS, send our sympathy to Janie and to all of you who may have lost loved ones this past year.

May your bike rides be filled with found objects and your “sammich always be cut diagonally” (it’s better eating according to Ron).

PHS President,  
Karen Rohn

## POTLATCH HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1954 TO CELEBRATE 60 YEAR CLASS REUNION JULY 19, 2014

The Potlatch High School Class of 1954 will hold their 60 year Class Reunion at the Scenic 6 Depot on July 19, 2014 in conjunction with Potlatch Community Days. When the Class of 1954 entered high school in 1950 there were 50+ students in their class and the majority were boys. Thirty-seven classmates graduated in May of 1954 – 14 girls and 23 boys.

According to the 1954 Annual ‘Senior Class History’: During their freshman year, with Barbara Hash as their president and Mrs. Beitz as their advisor, they held a barn dance. As sophomores, with Chuck Suiter as their president and Mrs. Boos as their advisor, they sponsored a mixer after one of their games and later a food sale as a fundraiser. A quote from their class history: “One afternoon in the spring of their sophomore year they drove to the ski lodge, had a picnic and dance and returned home later that evening - - much later!”

With Delfred Cone as their Junior Class President and Mrs. Beitz as their advisor, they held a Junior Class Turkey Feed which was a great success. This event supplied most of the finances for the annual Jr.-Sr. Prom and Banquet which was held in the spring. The class history also reads: “Even the juniors themselves were surprised at the ability of the group to give such

an enjoyable affair.” With the help of English teacher, Mrs. Bennett, both sections of the junior class presented plays. Near the end of the school year they ordered their class rings.

Their Senior Class President was Charles Suiter with Mr. Coble as advisor. The senior girls held a series of food sales, and the boys cut Christmas trees as fundraisers. Early in the first semester they went to Spokane to have their senior portraits taken at Christian Studio. They enjoyed many activities throughout the year ending with “Senior Day, Baccalaureate and Commencement exercises, and, of course, with receiving their much longed-for diplomas.”

Their senior teachers and administrators were: Lowell Scott (Superintendent), Keith Coble (Principal), Georgia Mae Bennett (English, Latin), Raymond Norton (Science, Coach), Joe Caldwell (History, Coach), June Smith (Commercial), Sam Jones (Band, Speech), Raymond Hegg (Math, Shop), Marie Ferer (Home Ec), and Patricia Duncan (PE, Chorus).

The class is hoping to have many members and their spouses attend their 60 year class reunion.



**CLASS MEMBERS:**

*Top:* Jim Boyd, Alice Bacca, Chuck Suiter, Ellic Bunney, Bob Hansen, Sue Brabb

*2nd Row:* Darlene Whitney, Bill McGreal, Gordon Taylor, Delfred Cone

*3rd Row:* Duane White, Cleo Dial, Gerald Watson, Mary Ellen Bennett, Bob Carter, Marilyn Turner, Francis Larson, Helen Johnsom, Dale Bunney

*4th Row:* Marie Katzenberger, Donovan Palmer, Lynne Johnston, Jerry Andres, Marilyn Kay Alsterlund, Gary Flanik, Martha Graham, Norman Bateson, Barbara Hash

*5th Row:* Dan Walser, Margaret Price, George Strong, Dean Nagle, Ron Nirk, Gary Kislig, Delbert Gillis, Marjorie Swatman, Melvin Fisk



## A PLACE CALLED "RIVERSIDE"

Built in the 1930's, Riverside was lively, with its dances, concerts, car races, roller skating and rodeos. Stars such as Johnny Cash, George Jones, Marty Robbins, Buddy Knox and Tex Ritter were just some of the performers appearing on stage. When asked about Potlatch, rumor has it that Johnny Cash was quoted as saying that it was "the meanest damned town" he'd ever played in.

Cash played Riverside on November 7, 1958, Lefty Frizzel appeared the following week, and Ray Price showed up to play on December 5, 1958. The year 1960 also showed some great performers at Riverside, with Buddy Knox playing January 16, Little Jimmy Dickens performing on February 6, and Hank Thompson playing on March 4. Hank Snow played on October 7 of the same year.

"I loved that place," Ruth O'Reilly (1919-2011) recalled 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."

According to Ruth, Joe Tuft and Ray Hansen started the first dance hall at Kennedy Ford in the 20's. That building was across the Palouse River from the Kennedy Ford Grange. When the 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.

As its popularity faded, Riverside at last fell into complete disrepair and was taken down some time in the 60's.

PHS has installed an exhibit on Riverside at the Potlatch Public Library



### MANY THANKS...

PHS would like to thank Potlatch resident Bertha Nygaard for letting us have access to her collection of Riverside Park posters. The posters here are from the 50's/60's. Copies are on display at the Potlatch Public Library. PHS is also selling t-shirts with a B&W image of the George Jones poster on the front for \$20. Contact a member or stop by BlackBird at the Depot to purchase one.

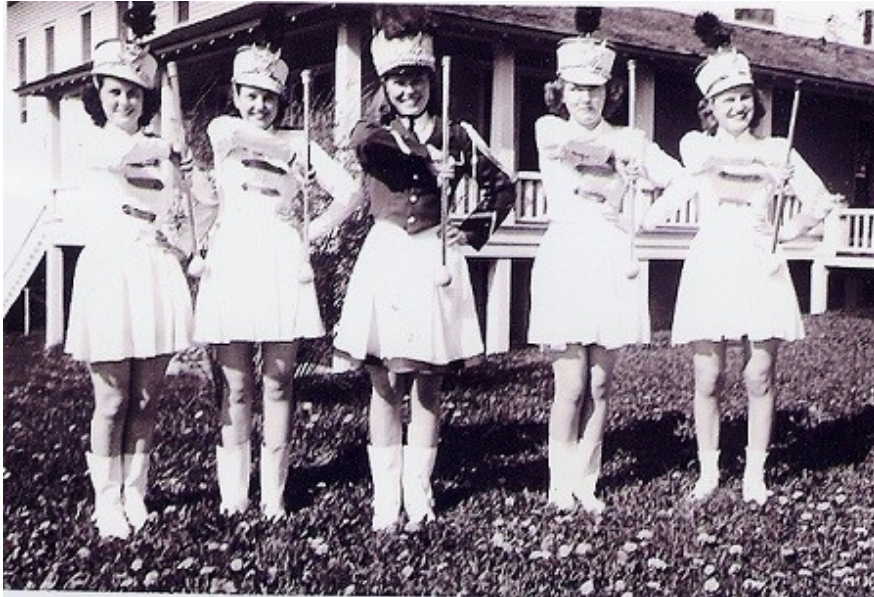


### NOTES FROM MEMBERS:

"We really enjoy reading your newsletter! We will send it on to Dick's Aunt Marjorie (Blood) Charlton who lives in Portland. She was born in 1918 and went to Potlatch High School." (Dick & Vicki Walser)

"I was born in Potlatch on February 25, 1928 and went to grade school at the grade school through the 7th grade. I have fond memories of the town and people." (Charles Woods)

**DO YOU KNOW ... ? MYSTERY PHOTO REVEALED !**



*Drill Team (Left to right) - Irene Kirsch, unknown person, Peggy Warner, Helen Gregg, Marjorie Ackerman (?) Tentatively identified by Peggy (Warner) Roe*

Peggy (Warner) Roe donated this photograph, which was printed in our last issue. Ryon Ownbey's Grandma Phyllis identified Helen's last name as "Gregg" and said that she "went to school with those girls."

If you are able to further identify anyone from this photo or know any stories connected to this picture, please contact the Potlatch Historical Society at:

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**UPCOMING EVENTS...**

**July 12 & 13, 2014** - Speeder Rides, History, Food & Model Trains at the WI&M Railway Depot! Speeder tickets sell out fast! Tickets available from Blackbird at the Depot, 10 am - 3 pm, Wednesday thru Saturday.

**July 19, 2014** - Potlatch Community Days! PHS will have a table in Scenic Six Park with information and items for sale (cards, t-shirts, \$1 cups/plates, etc.)

**July** - Watch for the County Schools interpretive signs to appear soon in Elmore, Princeton, and Harvard.

**POTLATCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIFETIME MEMBERS...**

**THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

- |                            |                                  |                          |                           |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Joe & Pam Anderson         | Samuel & Mary Jean Ferris        | Orvetta Minden           | James & Pauline Spangler  |
| Sherrel & Dorothy Anderson | Lee R. & Wilma Gale              | Jerry Nagle              | Mike Owen & Alice Spitzer |
| Richard G. Bennett         | Jim & Carol Haddock              | Ron & Janie Nirk         | M. Gary Strong            |
| Sue Benson                 | Dorthea Hagen                    | Ryon Ownbey              | Charles & Carol Taggart   |
| Karen Bizak-Marr           | Rev. C. Ted & Edith Hegg         | Donovan & Janice Palmer  | Roy Taylor                |
| Judy Capellen              | Bill & Barbara Holman            | Gretchen Potter          | Marvin & Dawn Thompson    |
| Don & Verna Comstock       | Bill Johnston                    | Suzanne Lay Qualmann     | Dean & Phyllis Vettrus    |
| Paul & Anna Conditt        | Gary Kendall                     | Karen Rohn & Gary Hayden | Mable Vogt                |
| Delfred Cone               | Dennis & Evi Knott               | Jerry & Judi Rohn        | Rodney & Mickey Vowels    |
| Jack & Barbara Coyner      | Jerry & Braunda Knott            | Ivan & Brenda Rounds     | Richard & Vicki Walser    |
| Mary Deary                 | Phyllis Laird                    | Zona Rueppel             | Monte & Helen Wilson      |
| William & Mary Deary       | Judy Larson                      | John & Betty Sawyer      |                           |
| Scott & Debi Dockins       | Larry Meister                    | Peter N. Scarfe          |                           |
| Barbara Doty               | Larry & Halette Meyer, Ruth King | Lauretta Sesock          |                           |

