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BOISE INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS (Advertiser Column by Nancy DeHamer)

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Since shortly after the founding of the city, Boise's citizens have merrily celebrated Independence Day. Parades, flags, speeches, picnics, patriotic music by band and choir, firecrackers, and athletic contests: all have been a part of Boise's Fourth of July celebrations.

Boise was a small, dusty, hot town in 1865. The Civil War was over, and the editor of the paper thankfully noted that all of Boise's citizens were joining in the Independence Day festivities. The day began with a gun salute and a procession through town led by volunteers from the garrison at Fort Boise. The procession ended at the canyon above the fort, where a patriotic exercise was held. After the oration, everyone had a picnic lunch and then returned to town.

By 1880 the Fourth of July celebration had grown into an all-day affair. After a morning parade, a long exercise was held which included several numbers by the Boise Brass Band and a city choir. The Declaration of Independence was read and an oration delivered; the ceremony closed with numbers by the band and choir. An interesting item in the paper said that many people were using firecrackers made of nitroglycerin; the editor let it be known that he thought such a dangerous practice should be stopped immediately.

The collection of the Idaho State Historical Society includes photographs of the Fourth of July celebration in 1903. This occasion was much like many that had been held before. The parade formed on Idaho Street between Tenth and Twelfth at 10:30

a.m. One photograph in the Idaho Historical Society's Collection shows the Goddess of Liberty float followed by the city fire department passing the old city Hall at the corner of Eighth and Idaho. The paper reported that "the doors of the fire halls stood wide open, the harnessed horses stamped impatiently and nervous citizens stayed at home all day yesterday during the bombardment of fireworks and the patriotic din which marked the 127th anniversary of the nation's birth." The camera substantiated the newspaperman's words, as the doors standing open at the lower left in a photograph in the Idaho Historical Society's Collection are those of the firehall.

The sponsor and organizer of the parade was the Boise Eagles Lodge. Its members posed for a picture, also in the ISHS files, with their float bearing the Queen of the Eagles before the parade. The paper reported that "the Eagles were handsomely dressed in white shirts and trousers, white caps and dark coats. They wore red, white and blue ties and carried canes striped with the national colors and decorated with red, white and blue streamers."

After the parade everyone moved to Riverside Park (on the north side of the Boise River at the foot of Tenth Street) for the patriotic program almost identical with the one held in 1880. The park was also the scene of picnicking after the exercises. Athletic contests were held on Eight Street, and the Eagles set off fireworks on Main Street during the afternoon.

Even though locations have changed, Boise's varied and gala Fourth of July celebrations have continued right up through modern times [1970].

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