

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

BOISE PARKS (Advertiser Column By Judith Austin)

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Boise has long been known as the City of Trees, and much of the greenery that gave her this name is found in her city parks.

These parks vary in size from small neighborhood nooks to the two great expanses of park and recreation land that are found along the Boise River near the heart of the city.

A photo in the files of the Idaho Historical Society show an idyllic scene, probably between 1910 and 1920, at Pierce Park. No longer in existence, it lay along the Boise River at the place where the Plantation Golf Course is now located, and it gave its name to a neighborhood and a school. While there were other parks in the city at the time, Pierce Park offered the chief escape from the bustle of downtown Boise to cool and peaceful shade.

The city's two largest parks have parallel histories: land for each [and in one case the park itself, laid out and planted] was given by a citizen in memory of his wife, soon after her death. A photograph in the Idaho State Historical Society's Collection shows Julia Davis Park around 1920, when it was about as old as Ann Morrison Park is now [1970]--which may be some comfort to those who prefer the deep shade of Julia Davis Park to the open spaces of Ann Morrison! The deer reserve shown in this photo was a part of the zoo, whose origins were one stray circus monkey that ran away from its owners between Boise and Mountain Home in 1916. Roughly half of the land on which Julia Davis Park lies was given to the city in 1907 by Tom Davis, who came to Boise Basin in search of gold in 1862, moved to the new city of

Boise in 1863, and filed the first homesteading claim here. He raised fruit and cattle in what is now downtown Boise, and the park land is part of his original homestead. The cabins in the park's Pioneer Village were built in 1869: the Coston cabin near Barber, and the Agnew-Pierce cabin on fifth between Main and Idaho. Even the bandshell, built in 1928, has some historic significance, for both the Davises were deeply interested in music.

Ann Morrison Park is, of course, much newer, and it is literally the product of its donor. The park was constructed by the Morrison Knudsen Company on land purchased from the Boise School District by the Morrison Family Foundation and was then turned over to the city of Boise in 1959. It is a community park in a unique sense: most of the original plants in the park were donated by citizens and groups in the community, including some beautiful large old trees. Two items of some historic interest were also placed in the park: the weather vane that perched atop the old city hall until its demolition in 1953, and--as part of a small bridge--the front step of General Lafayette Cartee's home, one of the grand old mansions on Grove Street.

Another photograph shows the site of Ann Morrison Park as it appeared in the 1930's. There are also photographs showing another Boise park in the foreground, this one built by the city and then given to the Union Pacific Railroad. The Platt Gardens lie just below the railroad station and were constructed in 1928, partly to provide an attractive viewpoint down the planned road [Capitol Boulevard] linking railroad station with capitol, and partly in thanks to the railroad for the coming of the main line to Boise in 1925.

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