

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Organized originally by legislative members and Boise old-timers as a pioneer association, February 10, 1881, and revived for a time when William J. McConnell was governor in 1896, the Historical Society of Idaho Pioneers elected to become a government corporation by legislative act of March 12, 1907. By that time a collection of pictures and objects had been assembled for display in pioneer residences and in a special room in Boise's Carnegie Public Library, but state support was needed to maintain any kind of effective museum program. After twenty-four years of pioneer reunions and preserving materials depicting frontier life, Idaho's state historical agency went through a series of development phases before provision was made for a modern museum program.

1. 1907-1920: John Hailey, a pioneer Idaho stage line operator and congressional delegate, retired as penitentiary warden to manage Idaho's state historical agency for fourteen years. His daughter, Leona Hailey Cartee, had been responsible for revitalizing earlier pioneer association collection and display after 1902, and Ella Cartee Reed joined his staff, September 15, 1912, to expand his publications program and to help enlarge historical collections that had to be moved to a number of locations before a long-term state capital display area became available with construction completion in 1920.
2. 1920-1931: Ella C. Reed maintained an active collection and publication program with a Statehouse basement museum that brought expanded public recognition to Idaho's colorful history for three decades. During an initial decade of display development, a long-term pattern for agency operation by pioneer women was established.
3. 1931-1946: Political changes in state administration affected Society operations after Altha E. Fouch assumed responsibility of agency management, September 15, 1931. A tradition finally emerged in which a new staff took over with no continuity between administrations that changed following elections in 1936, 1938, 1940, 1942, and 1944. Construction of a new museum in Julia Davis Park began in 1941, but had to be suspended from 1942 to 1949 because of wartime exigencies. A greatly reduced scale of operations after 1942 (with a one-member staff employed half-time through 1944 and then full-time for two years after that) restricted agency services greatly through 1946.
4. 1947-1956: Legislative approval of a State Archives Act in 1947 and of a museum building program in 1949 laid foundations for a modern museum and historical agency enterprise. Space problems for museum display were solved with completion of construction in 1950. Development of a

genealogical library, consolidated from Boise-area collections, came by 1952. Idaho's state archives finally was organized in 1952 and expanded every two years, so a period of administrative stability became possible.

5. 1956-1969: Governor Robert E. Smylie preferred to have a professionally-operated historical agency program with modern museum interpretive display, and this reform was commenced in 1956 when H. J. Swinney became Society director. With a new tradition of nonpartisan administration of a standard agency program, collections were expanded rapidly and educational programs (including dramatic improvements in museum display) were instituted. Publication of a newsletter and a quarterly journal commenced in 1956-1957, and regular summer field trips also expanded Society services. A substantial microfilm publication program made rare or unpublished research material available nationally. A cooperative highway marker program, instituted by Idaho's State Highway Department in 1956, identified and publicized more than a hundred historic sites. In 1966, an ambitious fourth grade school program, with appropriate publications and activities, was extended to serve all parts of Idaho. Construction of a storage center, a state library and archives building, and redesign of museum quarters for improved display helped make an effective program possible.
6. 1970-1986: With National Park Service funding for a state historic preservation program, another expansion of agency operations commenced in 1970. A new statute redefining Society responsibilities went into effect in 1972. With state agency reorganization in 1974, Society operations were administered through State Board of Education higher education staff, but separate budgeting, appropriations, and trustees were retained. State and local preservation legislation followed in 1975. Federal funding for historic preservation planning and resource inventory reached a maximum of \$600,000 a year in 1978, and for several years, federal acquisition and planning grants were also managed through this historic preservation program. Historic buildings (Pierce Courthouse and Boise's United States Assay Office acquired in 1972, followed by Old Penitentiary management and several additional acquisitions) also contributed to an enlarged preservation and interpretive program. An archaeological resource investigation and protection program element emerged by 1974 through cooperation of all of Idaho's professional archaeologists. Enlarged archive and library quarters were provided in 1978, and construction of greatly increased museum display space followed in 1982. A cooperative map and geographic names program, supported by United States Geological Survey resources, and cooperative microfilming of all Idaho newspaper files funded by State Library cooperation grants enhanced Society library resources. An oral history program funded in part by foundation grants, and an Idaho folklife center, made possible in 1982 by National Park Service cultural resource identification and other federal grants, broadened Society collection and field services to meet historic preservation needs. An historic preservation and general publication revolving fund supported cooperative book publication with several western university presses that began in 1984. Extension of National Park Service historic preservation grants to certified local governments has funded a series of cooperative Society projects in a number of Idaho communities. By 1986, about \$400,000 of annual income came from federal sources, compared with state appropriations of \$683,000 and with about \$150,000 from donations and other nongovernmental support.

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