

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

DIRECTORS AND SECRETARIES OF THE IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Number 882

1989

John Hailey became the first secretary/librarian of the Idaho State Historical Society when it was officially created by the Idaho Legislature on May 7, 1907. He was born August 29, 1835, in Smith County, Tennessee. The family moved to Missouri in 1848. In 1853, he went to Oregon with a wagon train. He worked at mining and farming and then joined the volunteer army in the Rogue River until 1862, when he went up into Washington with a pack train to the mines. In the spring of 1863 he operated a saddle and pack train from the Columbia River to the Boise Basin mines and in 1864 he had a stage line operating on the same route. He eventually extended his stage lines over a good part of the Northwest. From 1873 until 1875, he served as a delegate from the territory of Idaho to the United States Congress. He also served as an Idaho delegate to Congress from 1885 to 1887.

After Hailey's service in Congress, he returned to Idaho and farmed, raised stock, and dabbled in mining. In 1899, he was appointed warden of the Idaho State Penitentiary, a position he held until 1901. He returned to farming until the formation of the state historical department, with a museum in the basement of the capitol building. For the rest of his life, he devoted most of his energies to developing the Idaho State Historical Society and writing his book on the history of Idaho. He and his wife, Louisa, had eight children, six of whom lived to adulthood. Mrs. Hailey died in 1918. John Hailey, founding father of the Idaho State Historical Society, died April 10, 1921, at his home in Boise.

In 1911, **Ella Cartee Reed** started work as the first assistant in the Idaho State Historical Society. Ella Cartee was born in Salem, Oregon, April 12, 1859, the daughter of LaFayette Cartee. She came to Idaho in 1867 when her father was appointed surveyor general of Idaho. On September 4, 1884, she married George H. Reed, an attorney. Mr. Reed served several terms in the Idaho Territorial Legislature and was chief clerk of the House of Representatives. He practiced law in Caldwell, also selling insurance and real estate. In 1899, Ella C. Reed was the librarian for the Columbian Club in Boise. From 1901 through 1904, she was librarian for the Boise Circulating Library. In 1905, she moved to Portland with her husband. He died in Dufur,

Oregon, May 17, 1909. After his death, she returned to Boise, where she became John Hailey's assistant in 1911. She served in that position until his death in 1921, when the legislature appointed her librarian/secretary.

In 1917, the legislature provided payment for an assistant and archaeologist. Ella Reed's son, **George W. Reed, Jr.** served in that capacity for 1919 to 1925. Mrs. Reed retired from the Historical Society in 1931 and moved to Seattle in 1937, where she died September 10, 1944. [Ella Cartee Reed's brother Ross was married to John Hailey's daughter, Leona.]

Althea E. Fouch was appointed secretary/librarian of the Historical Society on September 1, 1931. Mrs. Fouch was born December 27, 1868, in Knoxville, Iowa. She came to Idaho by wagon train in 1877 from Council Bluffs, Iowa. On the 11th of March, 1881, she was married to Frank R. Fouch. He served as postmaster at Riverside [near Parma]. She was a school classmate of C. Ben Ross and was appointed to her position when Ross became governor. She served until the end of Ross' term as governor in 1936. **Esther Hanifin** was her assistant from 1933 until 1936.

In 1937, the new Republican governor, Barzilla Clark, appointed **Claudia Ross**, widow of a long-time prominent Nampa physician, as secretary/librarian of the Idaho Historical Society. She was born in Wisconsin, September 21, 1877. She grew up in Minnesota, and graduated from the Red River Valley University at Wahpeton, North Dakota. She also attended the conservatory of music at Minneapolis. She was married September 3, 1902, to Dr. Hugh P. Ross, at Tintah, Minnesota. They came to Nampa in 1905. Dr. Ross died January 17, 1936. She served as secretary/librarian for two years, 1937-38. Her assistant was **Esther Mutch**. Mrs. Ross died October 24, 1941, at Nampa.

Esther Thomas Mutch was born October 6, 1899, at Homedale, Idaho. She graduated from Links School of Business in Boise. After being Mrs. Ross' assistant at the Historical Society, she worked for the U.S. Postal Service and the U.S. Forest Service. She married Ernest Mutch on September 3, 1938 at Portland, Oregon. Mr. Mutch died December 1, 1972 and Esther Mutch died May 22, 1988, in Boise.

Alice Beath Nash was appointed to run the Idaho Historical Society with the title state historian in 1939. Alice Beath was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Miss Hill's School in 1911 and served the next four years working for the Episcopal Church among the Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians near Lander, Wyoming. In 1915 she married Martin Belknap Nash, an Episcopal minister, in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In 1939, she was appointed state historian by Governor C. A. Bottolfsen, a position she held for two years. Her assistant during her term of office was **Marian Oliver**. In 1939, the state legislature authorized the building of a separate State Historical Museum; the site in Julia Davis Park was chosen after considerable

debate. Mrs. Nash died November 25, 1966, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Ora B. Hawkins assumed the job of librarian and state historian in charge of the Idaho Historical Society in 1941, appointed by the board of trustees. Ora B. Stark was born in West Nicholson, Pennsylvania, December 30, 1874. She graduated from the State Teachers College in Lock Haven, PA. in 1895. She married James V. Hawkins on June 6, 1908, at Spokane, Washington.

They moved to St. Joe, Idaho, where Mr. Hawkins set up his law practice, moving to Coeur d'Alene two years later. He was an attorney and postmaster at Coeur d'Alene. He died in 1940. During her term in charge of the Historical Society, Mrs. Hawkins had several assistants, former Librarian Claudia Ross, until her death in 1941, and **Marie Bond** and **Shirley Jean Hoff**. Ora Hawkins died May 23, 1951, at her home in Coeur d'Alene.

Margaret S. Roberts became the next librarian and state historian for the Historical Society, serving from 1943 to May, 1945. Margaret Stevenson Roberts was born in Lewiston, Illinois, March 21, 1872. She graduated from St. Mary's of Wasatch and Brownell Hall and studied voice privately in Philadelphia. Her father was the first attorney general of Idaho. She started the first kindergarten in Idaho. She became librarian for the Columbian Club (who had started a library in Boise in 1898) in Boise in 1905 at a salary of \$55 per month. This library evolved into the Idaho Free Traveling Library which, in turn, became the Idaho State Library. Margaret Roberts served as director until 1933.

A quote from the 19th Biennial report of the Idaho State Historical Society states:

The Board was fortunate in securing the service of Miss Margaret Roberts as Librarian. Owing to her former experience in library work, she was exceptionally well qualified to handle the work. Miss Roberts has been most faithful and courteous to the thousands of visitors who have signed the register.

Despite the fact that the Museum has been opened only half-days, due to the war economy program, and that for the same reason her pay has been inadequate, Miss Roberts has performed her part creditably, and even obligingly worked overtime in order to accommodate service men and visitors who found their way to the Museum even though the entrance had to be closed in order to make space for urgently needed office room.

[The museum was in the basement of the Capitol Building at this time.]

Margaret Roberts was also vice president of the National Council of Women Voters, first Idaho chairman of the League of

Women Voters, president of numerous Boise organizations, and a Republican National Committeewoman. She received commendations both from the City of Boise and the Idaho Senate for her civic endeavors. After her death, May 25, 1952, the Margaret S. Roberts Radcliff Foundation at Radcliff College was established in her memory.

In May, 1945, **Flora Mason Foster** was appointed historian and librarian by Governor Charles Gossett. Flora Foster was born November 7, 1879, in Strother, Missouri. She was educated at Christian College in Columbia, Missouri, Kirksville Normal, and Idaho State College, Southern Branch, at Pocatello, Idaho. She taught school for many years around Arco and in Boise. She had a song published about Lost River, and wrote a junior high-level story, never published. She directed the Historical Society for only two years. Although only the basement walls were completed when construction was halted during World War II, work finally began again on the building of a State Historical Museum.

Gertrude McDevitt was appointed director/historian in 1947.

She served through the building of the new museum in Julia Davis Park and faced up to the tremendous challenge of moving into the new building. The formal dedication was December 16, 1950. She resigned August 1, 1956 due to illness of her husband and her own failing health. Mrs. McDevitt was born November 11, 1884 in Idaho City and was married in 1906 to John A. McDevitt in Boise.

She was home economist for the Idaho Power Company in the 1920's and managed the Mechanafe restaurant in Boise from 1935 to 1940.

Her assistant for over ten years was **Edith Mathews**. Mrs. McDevitt died in Boise on June 18, 1958.

With the resignation of Mrs. McDevitt, the board of trustees of the Historical Society decided it was time to move into the professional world of museum management. **Holman J. "Jerry" Swinney** came to the Society from a position as director of interpretation at Old Sturbridge Village, a large outdoor museum of New England life in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. He had also worked with the New York State Historical Association. He arrived in Boise in August of 1956 and began laying the groundwork for a whole new program for the Society. An invitation was for the first time extended to the people of Idaho to become members of the Society; up to this time it had been strictly a state agency without a membership nor any funds except the appropriation from the legislature.

In addition to the continuing work of Mrs. Mathews, a genealogical library was started with **Iola Stocking** as librarian.

Dr. **Merle Wells**, who had begun his association with the Society in 1946, while a history department faculty member at the College of Idaho, was officially appointed consultant historian in October of 1956. A quarterly journal was planned at this time and began with publication of the first issue of Idaho Yesterdays in Spring of 1957. The Society newsletter, Mountain Light had

its first issue mailed on October 31, 1956. Jerry Swinney left the Idaho Historical Society in the fall of 1965 after ten years to become director of the Adirondack Historical Museum at Blue Mountain Lake, New York. A. L. Alvord, chairman of the board of trustees spoke for the people of Idaho when he said of Swinney's leaving, "the loss of a dedicated professional who has done a fine job for the state and its people."

Robert C. Daum was appointed as director in May of 1966, chosen from a large field of applicants. He had been director of education of the museum of the Mystic Seaport Marine Historical Association. Before that he was field representative for the Ohio State Historical Society. Daum was born April 12, 1932, at Toledo, Ohio. He earned a bachelor of arts degree and a masters at Ohio State University at Columbus. He served two years in the U.S. Army, 1952-54. He was director of the Idaho State Historical Society from September 1966 to March 1967. He announced in February that he had resigned to become director of the new Maine State Museum in Augusta, Maine.

Merle Wells was appointed interim director until **Douglas R. Picht** was appointed director in September, 1967. He resigned in June of 1968 and Dr. Wells again became interim director until the appointment of **Arthur A. Hart**, who was appointed museum director in December of 1968. Mr. Hart was director from June of 1969 until retiring in February of 1986. Dr. Wells remained as state historian and archivist. Hart, a native of Tacoma, Washington, taught at the College of Idaho, in Caldwell before going to New England, where he taught for several years--finally in Longmeadow, Massachusetts.

Mr. Hart's replacement was Dr. **Melvin Smith** who served from April of 1986 to March of 1987, coming to the Idaho Historical Society from Salt Lake City, Utah.

The next director was **David Crowder**. Dr. Crowder was born in American Falls, Idaho. He graduated from Kuna High School, Boise Junior College, and Idaho State University receiving his M.A. in 1966. In 1971, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Utah. He was a professor of history at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho from 1966 until May 1, 1987 when he became director of the Idaho Historical Society. He had served on the Society's board of trustees from 1955 until becoming director.

By Marjorie J. Williams

Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428