

This month's theme:
Territorial Idaho



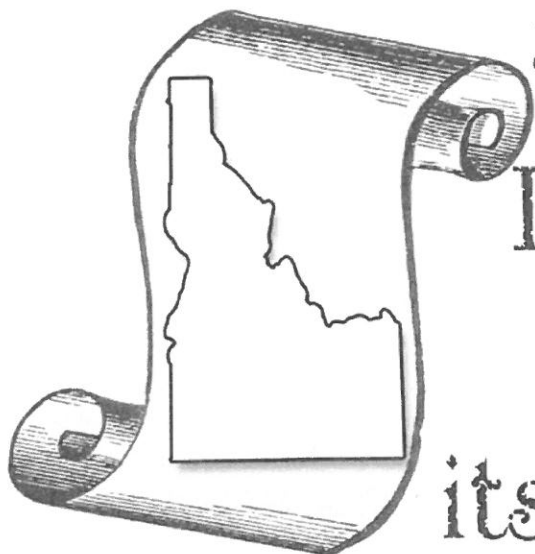
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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

PROSPECTOR

February, 2005



How Idaho Got its Name

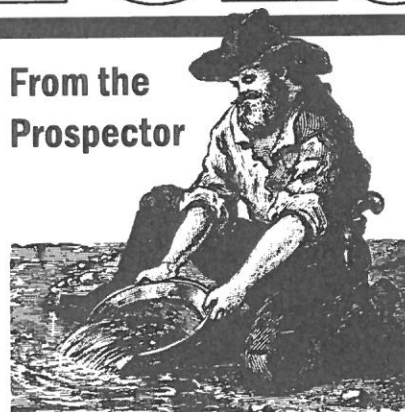
Do you know how Idaho was named? There are many stories about the naming of Idaho. Perhaps you have heard more than one of them. Almost all of them say that "Idaho" is a Native American word. This is not true. The name "Idaho" was made up in the mid-1800's. Making up names like this is very common. Many names for new products are needed every year, and

people work hard at coming up with new and original names for places and things.

Making up new names has been going on for a long time. When the United States added new land to the west, new states were formed. Each new state needed a name. Thomas Jefferson was one of the early American leaders who thought up names for new states. Washington, Illinois, and Michigan are from Jefferson's list of state

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From the Prospector



Howdy Prospectors,

You know, I wasn't always known as Lucky Noah. People only started calling me that when I found gold. For awhile, when I couldn't seem to strike it rich, people called me Empty Pocket Noah. Then there was that time when I broke my foot, I was Hopping Noah. A few years ago even, I used to eat limburger cheese sandwiches for lunch every day and people started calling my Smelly Cheese Noah. My point is that names change and sometimes those names have interesting stories behind them. This month we're going to talk about territorial Idaho and the strange way our state got its name. Hope you enjoy the story.

names, although the state that Jefferson would have named Washington is called Ohio.

Illinois and Michigan are names that Jefferson got from Indian words. About half of our state names are thought to be Indian words. Most Indian words, however, are very different from English words. Most Indian place names had to be changed a lot to make them into English words. Thus it often is hard to find what Indian words-if any-the Indian place names come from.

By 1860, just before the Civil War, mining in the West had led to the need for lots of new names for towns and camps. Names also were needed for territories that were to become states. People were running out of ideas. When the Colorado region needed a name in 1860, a leader from that part of the country thought up the name "Idaho." He told everyone that it meant "gem of the mountains." Since the Colorado people were looking for an Indian word, he told them it was an Indian word. The

Colorado people liked the name "Idaho." Their leaders asked Congress to use it for their territory. Then, just a few days after Congress voted to call that territory "Idaho," they found out that "Idaho" was not an Indian word at all. So they asked Congress to change the name "Idaho" back to "Colorado." "Colorado" wasn't an Indian word, either; it was Spanish. Still, they decided that if no one could find a good Indian word, they might as well go with "Colorado."

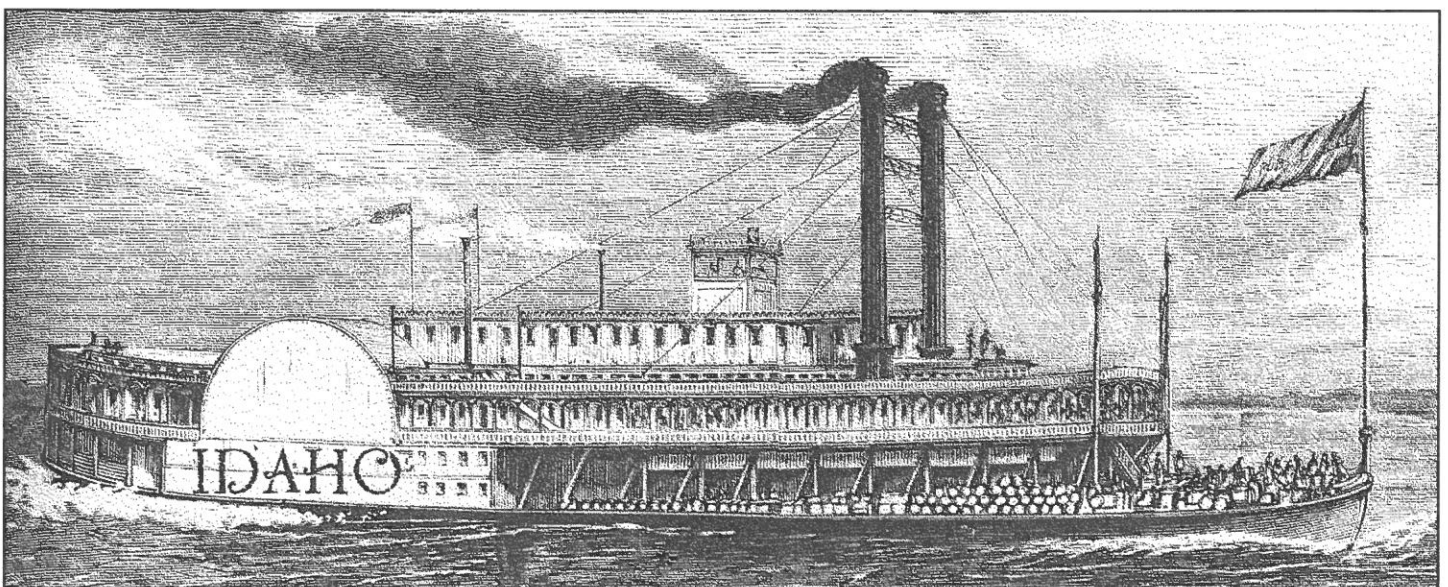
In 1860, while the Colorado leaders were talking of using the name "Idaho", one of their friends in the Pacific Northwest named a steamboat on the Columbia the Idaho. Later that year, gold was discovered in the Clearwater country. Soon the mines were called the Idaho mines, after the steamboat that thousands of miners rode on their way to the new gold camps. When the new mining country was made into a territory in 1863, Congress chose to name it Idaho. Just about everyone had forgotten about the Colorado mix-

up over the name "Idaho" by that time. Most people still believed that Idaho meant "gem of the mountains".

After Idaho was created, people began to ask about the Indians who were thought to have used the word "Idaho." Some were smart enough to know that "gem of the mountains" was not a good meaning for an Indian name. So they thought up all kinds of other Indian meanings for the word. But none of the Indian meanings made any sense, because "Idaho" is not an Indian word. People tried to find Nez Perce, Shoshoni, Yakima, and Arapaho words that sounded like "Idaho." But they never really got anywhere. They were looking for an Indian word that never really existed.

In the end, it's kind of amusing to think that our state has a made-up name. Even though it's not an Indian word, Idaho is a pretty good-sounding name. Since the man who thought up the name wanted it to mean "gem of the mountains," perhaps that's the best way to leave it. ☞

*Adapted from an article
by Merle Wells*





The Fun Page

HOW TO BUILD A LOG HOUSE

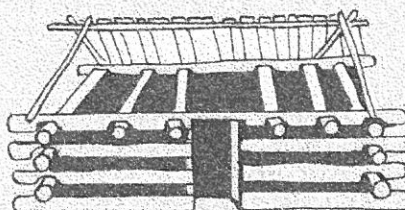


Gather straight sticks and cut them for logs.
Leave the bark on your logs and cut notches near each end.



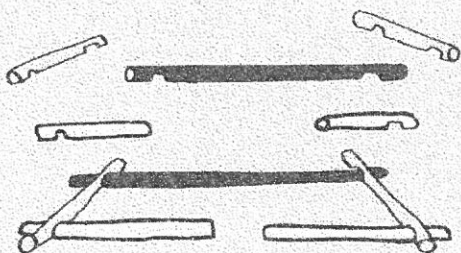
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Most log houses had attics for the children to sleep in.
The roof was built of logs and covered with boards and wooden shingles.



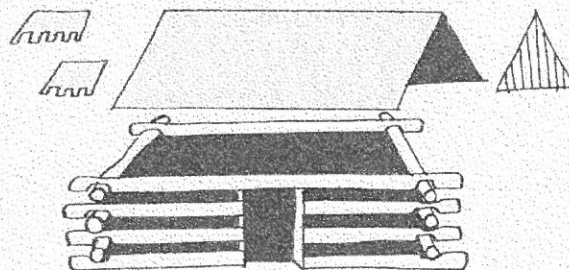
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Glue the corners together.
Cut a space in one wall for a door.



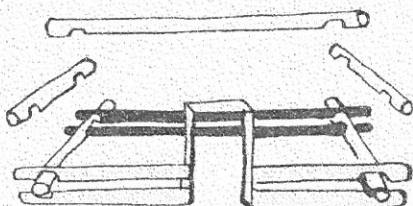
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Cut a cardboard roof, cut paper shingles and glue them to the roof.



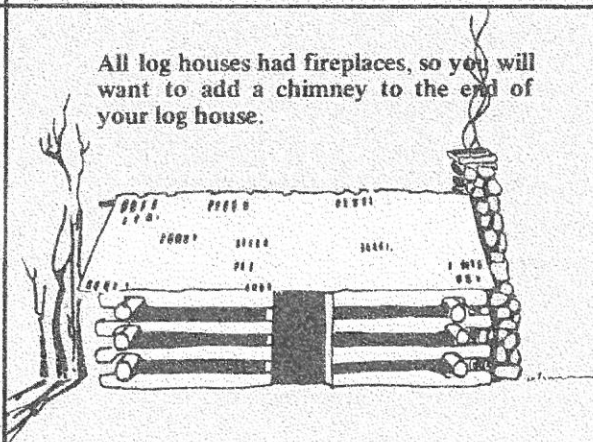
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Glue a strip of cardboard in the doorway to hold the logs together.
Windows could be made the same way.



3

All log houses had fireplaces, so you will want to add a chimney to the end of your log house.



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Next Month's Activities

Well, we've told you all we know about territorial Idaho, but we need your help so that we can learn more.

Pick from one of the activities below or make up your own about early Idaho and send it in to our Prospector Headquarters. We'll take some of your best work and print it in next month's magazine.

Remember to include your name, the school and town where you're from, and the name of your Prospector chapter. We can't wait to see what you send in!

History of a Name:

Many of the places in Idaho have interesting names. Although some of the names are made up, other have histories that can tell you interesting stories about life in the past. Do you know where your town name came from? Do a little research and tell us the origin of the name of your town. If you can't find information on that, try the name of your school or the street you live on.

License Plate History: One of the ways Idaho celebrates its heritage is with different license plate designs. We have license plates that have a picture of the Capitol, license plates that show our wildlife and mountains, license plates that feature our favorite sports; we even have license plates with a picture of a potato.



Can you design a license plate that features an important event in the state's early history? Study the plates on your car at home and make a new state plate that we Prospectors would be proud to have on our cars.

State Nicknames: Every state has a nickname. Illinois is the "Land of

Lincoln" because Abraham Lincoln lived there. Utah is the "Beehive State" for the Mormon symbol of the beehive. And Minnesota is "Land of 1,000 Lakes" for its many bodies of water. Of course, here in Idaho, we are known as "The Gem State." This seems like a pretty good nickname, because of all the

rocks and mineral that can be mined here, but are there other possibilities? See if you can come up with a few new nicknames for our state. Remember to write a short explanation showing why you think your nickname is a good one.

Send in your work by March 14th to:

Prospector Club
Lucky Noah
Idaho State Historical Museum
610 North Julia Davis Drive
Boise, ID 83702

Or email it to us at
kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us.

This month's theme:
The Gold Rush



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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

PROSPECTOR

March, 2005



The Gold Rush

On July 3rd in the year 1890 Idaho was admitted to the union as the nation's 43rd state. At that time about 89,000 people had settled in Idaho. Just 30 years before, around 1860, the population was less than 10,000. That means that the population more than doubled every ten years from 1860-1890. A lot of people came to Idaho in such a short time. Nearly half of the towns that we can travel to in Idaho, like Boise and Lewiston, were established during those years. So what did Idaho

have that brought so many people in such a short time? Well, gold, of course! The unique thing about Idaho's gold rush is that most of the miners came from areas where gold had already been discovered, like California, Oregon, Washington and Nevada.

Gold was first discovered on the Clearwater River in 1860 and on the Salmon River about a year later. At this time Idaho wasn't even a state yet. In fact,

Continued on next page

From the Prospector



Howdy Prospector!

Well, spring is on its way. The snow is melting, the days are getting longer, the birds are singing, and my mule is getting restless. You see, spring means that prospecting season is around the corner. It's our favorite time of year. Soon the mule and I will be knee-deep in a mountain stream, panning for gold.

In between packing supplies and checking our claim, we thought this would be a good month to tell you the story about the Idaho gold rush. You know, I'm not the only one around here who caught gold fever. In the late 1800's almost everyone had it. In fact gold is what brought lots of folks to Idaho. Those nuggets helped make us a state.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy this month's story of the gold rush.

Idaho would be named a territory before it would be granted statehood. The gold rush that came after this first discovery of gold played an important part in these events. News of the exciting discovery traveled quickly and caused a stampede of some 10,000 miners into the area. They were all hoping to strike it rich or hit "pay dirt" as they used to say. Unfortunately, most found little or no gold. Some left the area to look for riches elsewhere, but many settled in Idaho and became shopkeepers or farmers in order to earn a living.

Not more than a year later, in 1861, some lucky miners did strike it rich when they discovered gold in the Boise River Basin. They told some of their friends, who told some of their friends, and in no time at all miners were flooding into the area we now call southwestern Idaho. The area became a gold rush hot spot and the settlers brought with them a bit of the "Wild West" that we've seen in movies and read about in books. In just 5 years nearly \$24,000,000 worth of gold would be found in the Boise Basin mining area. Gold seemed to be everywhere. Once, when miners were digging for much-needed water, they found gold instead. It was during this time that Idaho City, originally called Bannock City,

became the largest and biggest city in the northwest..

All of these new settlers led to a large enough population to get the United States government to outline and name Idaho as a territory. This act of Congress was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. The capital of the territory was Lewiston because most of the settlers were coming to the northern part of the territory. Boise would be named the capitol city about a year later. At

not very happy about all the settlers moving onto their lands. Many battles and small wars were fought during this time and sadly, many Native Americans and settlers were killed.

After Idaho became a territory the gold rush frenzy slowed down because not as much gold was being found in the mines. Then, in 1880, when a large deposit of gold was discovered on the Coeur d'Alene River another huge wave of gold seekers rushed into the territory. Since the Northern Pacific and

the Oregon Short Line Railroads had built tracks stretching across the Idaho territory, miners were able to travel faster and in larger groups than in the early gold rush days. The population grew very fast as gold seekers, for the second time, poured into Idaho. In 1890 the United States Congress and President Benjamin Harrison named Idaho

the 43rd state in the Union.

A lot of people came to Idaho just to find gold, but most of them liked the mountains and the rivers and decided to stay and work and raise families. There are still some gold mines in Idaho, but most of the mines that were built between 1860 and 1890 have been shut down or turned into really neat tourist attractions. As for the mining "boomtowns" that were started during this time, most are still around but the people have found other ways to earn a living besides mining. ☘

by Glen Newkirk



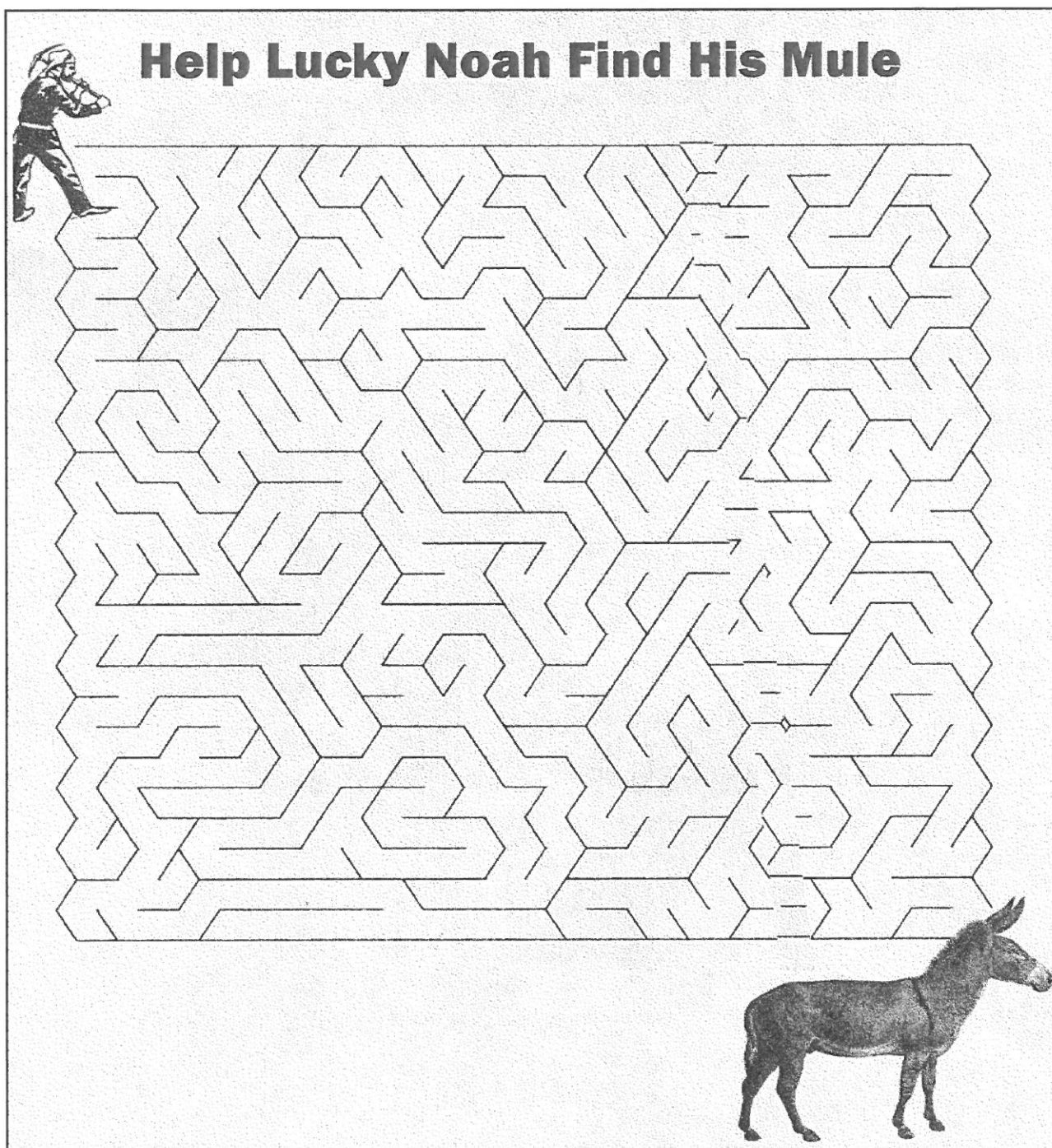
A crowd on the Streets of Idaho City

first Idaho territory included most of Wyoming and Montana, which were not states yet.

The Idaho Territory was a huge area with several Native American tribes and lots of forests and wild animals. This caused problems because the area was so large that it was hard to manage. In addition, the Native Americans were



The Fun Page



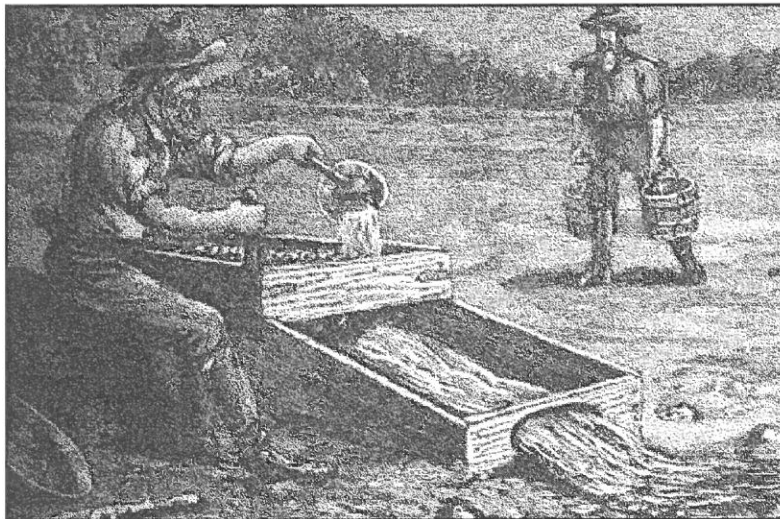


Next Month's Activities

Well, we've told you all we know about gold mining, but we need your help so that we can learn more. Pick from one of the activities below or make up your own gold rush project and send it in to our Prospector headquarters. We'll take some of your best work and print it in next month's magazine. Remember to include your name, the school where you're from, and the name of your prospector chapter. We can't wait to see what you send in!

Striking it Rich: Gold mining was a tough profession. Although most people didn't make much money, a few prospectors got fabulously rich. Pretend you are one of those lucky gold miners. What would you do with your new-found wealth? Draw us a picture or write a short story telling us how you spent your riches. Remember though, this is the late 1800's. No fair buying things that are only available today.

A Better Mining Machine: Placer miners had a lot of different tools to choose from. Gold pans, sluices, cradle rockers, hydraulic giants, and dredges could all be used to extract gold from rivers and rocks. Can you build a better mining machine?



Put on your inventor's cap and draw us a picture of a new machine that easily finds and extracts gold.

Ghost Town: Many early Idaho gold mining towns had a boom and then a bust. People rushed to the town when gold was discovered, but when the mining dried up,

everybody left. Throughout the state, these ghost towns still stand. Sometimes there are a few spooky old buildings, sometimes there's nothing left but a pile of rubble and a boarded up mine shaft. Have you ever been to a ghost town or do you know of a famous ghost town near where you live? Give the rest of the Prospectors a short report on where the town is located, what you'd see if you were there, and some history if you know it. We can't wait to see what you find out!

Send in your work by April 13th to:

Prospector Club
Lucky Noah
Idaho State Historical Museum
610 North Julia Davis Drive
Boise, ID 83702

Or email it to us at
kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us.