



## Preserving Idaho's Heritage for Tomorrow

### Idaho Heritage Trust

## Idaho Heritage Highlights

September 2012

Fall is a busy time of year for the Idaho Heritage Trust. September finds our Board of Trustees touring a different region of our far flung state, meeting with local preservationists and visiting their projects. This year the Trustees toured the historic mining towns of Idaho City and Silver City (see articles below).



It is also the time of year the Trust awards matching grants to organizations working to conserve or restore historic buildings, artifacts, and collections. The review process begins in October with a technical review by Fred Walters, our Historical Architect, and Tricia Canaday, Architectural Historian and National Register coordinator with the State Historic Preservation Office. Following the technical review, volunteers from Regional Committees consider applications from their counties. Before making their final selection of grant recipients, the Board of Trustees reviews all comments and applications. Successful applicants are notified in December. Please encourage any potential applicants you know to submit an application, postmarked by September 30, 2012.

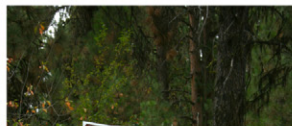
In closing, the Board of Trustees and I wish to thank the Idaho City Historical Foundation, St. Paul's Catholic Church, the Historic Silver City Foundation, the Bureau of Land Management, and the United States Forest Service for their exceptional work in the preservation of Idaho's Historic Fabric.

Respectfully yours,

Katherine Kirk,  
*Executive Director*

### Board of Trustees Fall Tour

Historic Mining Towns: Idaho City and Silver City



The Idaho Heritage Trust Board of Trustees tour different counties of Idaho each fall to visit with local preservationists and to see projects that have received support from the Trust. This September the tour included the historic mining towns of Idaho City and

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## Grant Applications are Due September 30th, 2012

Public projects that will result in the preservation of buildings and artifacts are encouraged to submit applications for matching grant funding from the Idaho Heritage Trust at this time.

Application information and Criteria for Selection can be found at the following link:

[Grant Application](#)

Please submit three copies of the grant application to:



*Trudy Jackson leads a tour of the Idaho City Pioneer Cemetery*

Silver City.

Idaho City projects we visited included the Pon Yam House, City Hall, Pioneer Cemetery, Odd Fellows Hall, and St. Joseph's Catholic Church. We also visited Our Lady Queen of Heaven Chapel in Oreana on our route to Silver City where we toured the restored Schoolhouse, Odd Fellows Hall, and Our Lady of Tears Catholic Church.

Read about some of the projects we visited this year below.



*Marty Peterson leads the Trustees and Spouses on a tour of Silver City.*

## Pon Yam House, Idaho City

by Rosemary Ardinger, Idaho City Historical Foundation



The Idaho City Historical Foundation is grateful to the Idaho Heritage Trust for its

Idaho Heritage Trust  
PO Box 140617  
Boise, ID 83714



*Stained Glass window,  
St. Joseph's Catholic Church,  
Idaho City*

## Idaho Heritage Trust receives Grant from the Steele-Reese Foundation

The Idaho Heritage Trust is pleased to announce receipt of a \$25,000 grant from the Steele-Reese Foundation. The Grant will be used to award grants for preservation of historic sites, buildings, and artifacts in rural communities of Idaho.

The Trust is grateful to the Steele-Reese Foundation for their continued and on-going support of our program and rural Idaho.

## Summer Highlights

### BLM conserves Fisher Bottoms

Upper Snake Field Office, Idaho Falls District



People familiar with Idaho writer Vardis Fisher often associate him with his life on the Snake River in Hagerman where he wrote most of

support over the years, and most recently in 2012, for its assistance in preserving the Pon Yam House, the only remaining building from Idaho City's Chinese population. According to the 1870 census, Chinese comprised 46% of the total population around Idaho City, and the Pon Yam House was a noted place of business.

Pon Yam was a prominent, successful businessman and respected leader in the community. From the building, he sold herbs, food, and other goods.

Built in 1865, after the first of two major fires devastated Idaho City, the walls are three courses of brick, with traditional striping on the outer walls. To protect it from future fires, it was equipped with metal fire shutters, a dirt-insulated ceiling, and a rubble-stone foundation.

The Idaho City Historical Foundation purchased the Pon Yam House in the mid 1990's and began the stabilization and preservation of the house. Stabilization of the building required a new foundation and structural repairs to the roof and walls. Complete removal of any wall-board, fixtures and plumbing provides the visitor with the experience of a house built in the 1860's.

This summer, support of the Idaho Heritage Trust was essential in solving another part of the puzzle of the structure of the walls. Under the direction of Fred Walters, and with the hands and knowledge of master mason Budd Landon, the challenge of creating adobe-like mortar designed to distribute the weight of the locally-made bricks was tackled to fine effect. The north wall was stabilized and repaired, the south wall and window were restored, and a number of significant cracks in the walls of the house were also repaired.

Restoration and preservation of the Pon Yam House continues. It is open on a seasonal basis and/or through appointment by calling the ICHF 208-392-4550.

The Pon Yam House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*The Idaho Heritage Trust provided Technical Advice and a \$2500 matching Grant in 2011.*

## Our Lady Queen of Heaven Chapel, Oreana



In the late 1800's this stone building was erected for the Grayson-Hyde cattle outfit as a general store. Mike Hyde and his brother Dave were cattlemen who settled on a ranch in Bruneau in 1888. John Pierson, a Swedish immigrant, and Jim Kelly, considered the best mason in the area completed the work. The men were paid three dollars for a ten-hour day.

In the early 1900's, Mike and Dave's brother Ben ran the store. Over the years, the building changed hands many times.

By 1961 Albert and Bonnie Black, then owners of the ranch, donated the abandoned building to the Catholic Church. With the help of volunteers and local donations, the Rev. Herbert Merzbach restored the building. The Rev. Merzbach in his earlier life had spent time in northern Africa with the French Legionnaires and many of the restored elements are a reflection of his experiences and artistic expression.

Today the chapel interior has been restored with native stone floors, a sandstone

his novels. But his experience of living on the Snake River began in his youth when his parents homesteaded property on the South Fork northwest of Swan Valley. The family lived in a dilapidated log cabin, while building their first home in 1916 (pictured above). Fisher has left written accounts of his childhood there -- of listening to the raging river and waking to nightmares of flooding (Palisades Dam was built in 1957).

In 1931, following a job teaching English at New York University, Fisher returned home to his parent's property in Idaho. He built a larger home and guest quarters cabin on higher ground and lived and wrote there for the next several years. After winning the Harper Prize for *Children of God* in 1939, he and his third wife Opal Holmes moved to Hagerman where he lived for the rest of his life.

The 420-acre parcel called Fisher Bottoms was recently purchased by the BLM - Upper Snake Field Office in Idaho Falls as part of their Conservation of the South Fork of the Snake River. Remaining today are the Fisher's six historic structures and 100-year-old apple trees. The farmland has been reseeded with native grasses and a variety of wildlife and some trophy size cutthroat trout thrive on the property.

While visiting the site recently, we observed scenes reminiscent of Vardis Fisher's life on the Snake River almost a century ago: a pair of irate sandhill cranes chasing a large bull and cow moose away from their nest, some fledgling bald eagles stretching their wings, and the untimely death of a young cow moose. It was easy to imagine Fisher chopping wood for the evening's fire as the sun set over the old homestead.

Thank you to the BLM for saving this historic Idaho treasure.



*The Idaho Heritage Trust is providing initial building assessments and drawings of all structures as well as programming ideas for protected public access.*

References: [Boise State University](http://www.boisestate.edu)



altar, wood paneling, and many iconic pieces imported from as close as Oregon and as far away as Germany. A small belfry was built over the front entrance to house the bell that originally hung in Our Lady of Tears in Silver City, an interesting story in itself. With the interior restoration work complete, a visitor entering the chapel may feel transported to another time and place, perhaps to a moorish church in north Africa.

Masons recently completed a four year conservation effort that focused on repointing and minor replacement of the exterior native stone.

Our Lady Queen of Heaven Chapel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Reference: [St Paul's Catholic Church](#)

*The Idaho Heritage Trust has provided on-going support for restoration of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Chapel and awarded the project an additional \$3000 in 2011.*

### Silver City Schoolhouse



From 1863 - 1865, 250 Silver City mines produced an estimated \$30 million in lead and silver ore. People flocked to the remote town from all over the country to stake their claims. During it's heyday, Silver City had 300 homes, 75 businesses, twelve ore-processing mills, and a population of 2,500. It served as the Owyhee County Seat from 1866 to 1934, published the first daily newspaper in Idaho, *The Owyhee Avalanche*, and in 1874 installed the first telegraph in the Territory. It also ran some of the largest stage lines in the west.

The booming city soon built churches, meeting halls, and schools. In early 1892, Silver City voters approved a \$5000 bond to construct a new school building large enough to welcome students to all twelve grades. The new school opened on November 21, 1892.

One of the best known teachers of the school was Permeal French. Like many teachers of that era, she had no teaching certificate. In 1898, the year that the bonds for the building were paid in full, she was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction and she drafted the first state laws requiring teacher examinations and

### Antelope Creek Ranger Station Conservation Plan

Salmon-Challis National Forest



District Ranger Diane Weaver decided to create a plan to save the Antelope Creek Ranger Station after a crowd of Mackay locals shared their memories and stories with her at the 100 year anniversary of the building's construction.

The Salmon-Challis National Forest and the Idaho Heritage Trust partnered together to create a Condition Assessment and Preservation Plan. The resulting plan is to reopen the site as a visitor contact station for selected federal and state agencies along with the development of an environmental education center for youth.

Originally constructed in 1908 as part of the Lemhi National Forest administrative program, the Antelope Ranger Station is one of the oldest Forest Service stations in Idaho. In it's time, it served the vast territory of central Idaho.

In the 1930's the United States Forest Service (USFS) developed standards for the appearance and function of buildings on USFS property. At that time, the USFS remodeled the Antelope Creek Ranger Station and constructed an additional garage and barn. The site and its buildings have retained most of the historic fabric and character of the 1930's.

The goal of the USFS is to retain the historic character and quality of the buildings, to create an experience for the public that matches the historic period it represents, and to expand opportunities for educational and interpretive programs.

Thank you to the USFS for saving this historic Idaho treasure.



certification. She was the first Idaho woman to be elected to a statewide office. From 1908 until 1936 she was Dean of Women at the University of Idaho, where she was known as "The Dowager of Discipline".

As mining activity in the area subsided, the school was eventually closed in 1942.

The Idaho Cattleman's Association began holding their annual meetings at the schoolhouse in 1962 and continue to do so fifty years later. Today, the Historic Silver City Foundation, Inc. owns the Schoolhouse. The foundation was jointly formed by the Silver City Property Owners Association, the Melba School District, and the Owyhee Cattleman's Association. In 1999, the Foundation partnered with the Idaho Heritage Trust to raise the funds for architectural plans and building restoration. Over \$300,000 has been raised and restoration is well underway. This year the Trust provided a matching grant for replacement door hardware. The hardware was cast from a mold of the original door hardware. The exquisite detail in the hand-cast bronze is remarkably beautiful.



*New Door Hardware*

The Trust owes a debt of gratitude to Marty Peterson. As the President of the Foundation, he was the driving force behind the school's restoration. In addition, as overseer of planning and implementation of Idaho's 1990 centennial celebration, he was one of the Trust's founders. The staff and board of the Idaho Heritage Trust extend our warmest wishes to Marty upon his recent retirement from the University of Idaho and more than fifty years of public service to our state.

The Silver City Schoolhouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Reference: 'Eagle Informer' July 2011, [www.historicsilvercityidaho.com](http://www.historicsilvercityidaho.com).

*The Idaho Heritage Trust has provided on-going support for restoration of the Schoolhouse and awarded a \$2500 grant for replacement door hardware in 2011.*

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