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The Community Page

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Bonneville County: 100 Years of Looking Forward

On February 7, 1911, Idaho's ninth Governor, James Henry Hawley, signed the legislative bill that established the county known as Bonneville, and the Bonneville County Heritage Association is determined to make sure that the county's centennial birthday does not pass unnoticed.



On the 7th of February of this year, the celebration got underway with official proclamations and activities at the county courthouse.

Many more events are planned, including a series of educational presentations to highlight the history of the county, centennial-focused activities on Independence Day and a gala celebration at the Civic Auditorium, November 10–12, to seal the festivities.

Moreover, the Bonneville County Heritage Association (BCHA) is looking for treasure: They want to identify 100 spots of exceptional interest within Bonneville County borders and produce a treasure hunter's guide to finding them.

Ways you can help include volunteering to pitch in with the many tasks that can make this a Centennial to remember, coming up with ideas for events, urging your organization to join forces with the Centennial organizers, suggesting "treasures" to the BCHA, attending the various activities and donating to the cause.

The bonnevilleheritage.org website is the place to learn more about the celebration and to find updated information as the plans develop.

But ... why should you care?

Does it really matter that Bonneville County is 100 years old? Here is how members of the Bonneville County Heritage Association responded to that question:

Ann Rydalch is quick to point out that the celebration is for both residents and non-residents. It is not an invitation-only party. She points out that the many activities will be both fun and educational, and she hopes that the events will be especially appealing to students. According to Ann, "If you understand the trials and successes of the past, that will help you with your future."

For Gary Goodson, it's all about the values embodied by those who founded Bonneville County—and by those who keep the county going. Helping others, respecting one another, setting ambitious goals, honoring our heritage and keeping going, even when the going is tough—it is essential that these primary ingredients of success be maintained

in both young and old members of our community. Gary points out that a Heritage Association member recently wrote a book, "George Brunt, Young Pioneer of Eagle Rock," that portrays these values and is part of the curriculum in many of the area's fourth grade classrooms.

Mary Jane Groberg Fritzen also sees the book as a valuable tool in the transmission of a sense of heritage to young people, and she agrees wholeheartedly with Ann about the value of "learning from the past in order to prepare for the future." "After all," says Mary Ann, "the pioneers were thinking of the future. When you put yourself in their shoes, you're not looking back ... you're looking forward."

Centennial Series Educational Programs

These events are planned for the second Tuesday and fourth Thursday of each month, culminating on October 27. All are set for 7 p.m., but the locations vary. For a current schedule of these events, go to the bonnevilleheritage.org website. Be sure to check back to that site for updates and possible changes.

Topics include histories of Ririe, Antelope, Ririe Reservoir, Palisades Dam, York, ancient ferns, Tautphaus Park, Idaho National Laboratory, canals and irrigation, Ammon, Iona, the stagecoach and railroad, Lincoln, Swan Valley, Grays Lake, Idaho Falls and more.

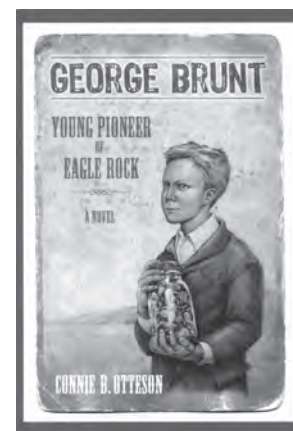
Information about November's gala celebration and developments in the plans for Independence Day can also be found on the website. Help is especially needed as we look ahead to possibilities for the 4th of July. Again, your ideas and participation are eagerly sought.

You can speak with a member of the Bonneville County Heritage Board by calling Ann Rydalch at (208) 522-6741, Gary Goodson at (208) 419-3301, or Mary Jane Fritzen at (208) 522-3185.



Captain Benjamin Bonneville (1796–1878) spent much of his life exploring the Idaho region. His exploits were recorded by Washington Irving in his classic book "Adventures of Captain Bonneville."

George Brunt, Young Pioneer of Eagle Rock



Idaho Falls native Connie B. Otteson penned this historical novel specifically to celebrate Bonneville County's 100th birthday. Many area schoolteachers see the book as a valuable addition

to Idaho history and are using it in the classroom curriculum. Illustrated by a local artist, John P. Hart, the book is based on the real-life story of a pioneer who came to this part of the Snake River Plain when Idaho Falls was still known as Eagle Rock. It may be aimed at young folks, but the story of George Brunt will entertain, captivate and educate readers of all ages. You can secure a copy of the book at the Museum of Idaho store or at most local bookshops.

Why attend the Bonneville County Centennial Celebrations and even volunteer to pitch in with your ideas, time and resources? Connie B. Otteson puts it like this in the closing paragraph of "George Brunt, Young Pioneer of Eagle Rock":

"May all of these settlers serve as an inspiration for future generations of Idaho school children. And may the citizens of Bonneville County and the State of Idaho remember with reverence those trailblazers who struggled to carve a beautiful, civilized valley from a barren sagebrush wasteland—a place where all may live in greater comfort and peace, free to pursue their own special dreams and adventures."