



BOUNDARY COUNTY  
*Historical Society*

P. O. Box 808  
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## Upcoming Events

<b>July 25</b>	Premier showing at the Museum of the movie "A Natural Balance – Boundary County"
<b>September 13</b>	Howard Kent will narrate a History Walk in downtown Bonners Ferry for the Class of 1964. The walk will be open to the public.
<b>October</b>	4th Annual Museum fundraising dinner and auction is now in the early planning stage.

Check the Museum website at [www.bonnersferrymuseum.org](http://www.bonnersferrymuseum.org) for Museum event information.

## Red Carpet Movie Premier at the Museum

Kootenai River Days is fast approaching and the Boundary County Museum will be actively involved in this community celebration. The Museum will host the world wide premier of a just completed film, "A Natural Balance – Boundary County". This 30 minute film, produced by Boundary County and filmed by Bonners Ferry natives Kyle Flory and Rob Tenas, shows the many economic and cultural activities, and geographic wonders of our County.

The "Red Carpet" event will be held at the Museum starting at 7:00pm on Friday, July 25. Refreshments will be served. The event is open to the public and free of charge. Donations will be appreciated. Dress for this event is North Idaho formal.

## Museum Hours

Summer hours are in effect at the Boundary County Museum through October 1. The Museum is open to the public from 10:00am to 4:00pm, Tuesday through Saturday. The admission fee is \$2 per adult with a maximum of

\$5 per family. Children under 14 and current members of the Boundary County Historical Society are admitted free.

## Current Board Members

The Boundary County Museum is operated by the Boundary County Historical Society, a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization. The current Board of Trustees is composed of:

Cal Russell, *President*  
Dave Gray, *Vice President*  
Stephanie Tucker, *Treasurer*  
Dottie Gray, *Secretary*  
David Koon, *Trustee*  
Jill Nystrom, *Trustee*  
Marj Pinkerton, *Trustee*  
Sue Kemmis, *Curator*

The Board of Trustees meets at 5:30pm at the Museum on the second Tuesday of each month. The public is invited to attend.



Boundary County Historical Society and Boundary County Museum

# Time Capsule

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## Railroad Courtyard Project Nears Completion

If you've driven past the Museum during the last few weeks, you may have noticed the construction activity in the courtyard area. Work is progressing at a near feverish pitch. BR Concrete, Inc., with Rich Brown at the helm, has completed pouring the new slab and sidewalks. Gene Andrews and Rod LePoidevin are currently constructing the "depot". Fred Nystrom and the crew at North Idaho Ironworks have been fabricating the new fencing and should have that installed in July.

The Courtyard project consists of a new slab for displays and programs, a depot (gazebo), and perimeter fencing. The project was made possible through *(continued inside)*

*At right: BR Concrete pouring new slab  
Below: Gene Andrews and Rod LePoidevin finishing depot*



This project has not been without obstacles. The day prior to the planned slab pouring, Sue Kemmis opened up the Museum to find the restroom floors covered with sewer backup. The nearly 100 year old sewer pipe had broken resulting in the unanticipated flood. KG&T Septic quickly responded and replaced the line from the Museum to the city main. Digging the new sewer line uncovered a portion of the water line, which was found to be in nearly as bad a shape as the sewer line. A decision was made to replace that line also, so the Museum now should be good for another hundred years.

# Opening Day for the Museum

*"ALL ABOARD!"* echoed the conductor's warning as passengers grabbed their boarding tickets for the "Hear the Whistle Blowing" opening event at the Museum on Saturday, May 24th. Conductor David Koon punched tickets and saw that everyone was seated and ready to travel. Passengers rode the rails from Eastport to Bonners Ferry via a video presentation provided by Jack McElroy, with narration by tour guide, Sue Kemmis.

James J. Hill brought the Great Northern Railway to Bonners Ferry in 1892. On January 4, 1893, Tom and Mary Desmond brought a bobsled to their cabin door, nestled the children into a warm comforter, and started out for Crossport to witness this historic event. Terry Howe, reading from the journal of Catherine Julia Desmond, shared her narrative account of the excitement and anticipation, and hearing Mr. Hill's few but memorable words to those gathered.

The Kootenai Valley Railway, completed in 1899, was a subsidiary of the Great Northern, and connected the main line in Bonners Ferry with the Kaslo and Slocum Railroad at Kootenai Lake. Howard Kent read a narrative from engineer Ed Fairbrurn

point of view. One of the stories told how he and fireman "Ash Cat" (Harry Cook) experienced a derailment heading into Porthill during the dead of winter, when they struck something on the line covered in snow and toppled "the Old Girl" right over, sliding 35 feet into the valley.

D.C. Corbin, an Inland Empire construction magnate, built a railway from Spokane to the international border at Eastport to connect with the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1905. This story was told by Dave Gray via Mrs. Viola Jacobson, an early resident of Snyder, Idaho. The story of Joe Mazout was a feature of his reading. It seems that Joe had found some frozen dynamite. He tried to thaw it out in a can of hot water,



and Mrs. Viola's husband, Jimmy, later reported that there was a big explosion and Joe didn't survive. Joe's discovery did serve as a "heads up warning" for fellow workers. How Mrs. Viola saved the train on one particular occasion earned her a commendation from the SI.

Following the readings, Jack Yeomans and Jack McElroy took the microphone and related some of their own personal experiences railroading in Boundary County. Passengers chimed in with additional comments and lots of humorous accounts were shared. All onboard enjoyed refreshments served in the dining car before departing the depot.

*by Dottie Gray*

## Museum Security System Enhanced

Security for the Museum and its contents has been a major concern for the Board of Trustees and Museum supporters. The issue of fire protection was addressed three years ago with the installation of an automated fire alarm system. The Board took an additional step of purchasing a security system recently to address the possibility of a break-in or theft of display items.

North Idaho CCTV, a local business, was contracted to install a closed circuit camera system for the Museum. Numerous cameras have been installed both inside the Museum and on the exterior perimeter of our facility and can be monitored in-house. The cameras provide a continuous feed which can be viewed in real time and are also stored on tape for law enforcement investigative use should a break-in occur.

The total cost of the project was \$940, with all labor donated by North Idaho CCTV.

The project was fully funded by donations from a variety of Museum supporters. Our thanks to the Bonners Ferry Rotary Club (\$500), Super 1 Foods (\$400), Dave Gray (\$40), David Koon (\$20), John Standal (\$50) and Pat Stewart (\$30) for their generous support. Our thanks also to Kelly Jones and the staff from North Idaho CCTV for their donated labor.

## Railroad Courtyard Project Nears Completion *(continued from front cover)*

a \$16,000 grant from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation, a generous donation from the BFHS Class of 1963, and the assistance of a variety

of Museum supporters. Although the concrete slab and perimeter fencing were contracted out to local vendors, the depot is primarily a volunteer effort. Gene Andrews and Rod LePoidevin are donating their labor to build the depot. Gary Regehr and Thick N Thin Beams donated

the sawing costs for the depot beams, and Idaho Forest Group donated the dimensional lumber for the project. Terry Howe, Don Morice, Howard Kent, and John Standal busied themselves staining the wood. A formal public dedication for the completed project will be held this fall.

## New Addition to the Museum Collection



Items relating to the history of Boundary County find their way to the Museum in various ways, at times somewhat unusual. A case in point is a floor safe recently donated to the Museum. The safe was marked "Sold by Norris Safe & Lock Co.; Seattle, Wash. & Vancouver, B.C." In addition, the name "H.A. French" was printed across the top. This last notation qualified the safe as a significant piece of County history. The safe was offered for auction at the weekly sale at Sater's Auction Barn and was recognized by some in attendance for its significance.

Henry A. French moved to Ockonook, later renamed Porthill, with the Twohy (Two-e) Contractors during construction of the Kootenai Valley Railway, a branch of the Great Northern Railway. He later went to work at the general store with Mrs. Mary Barnes, who was also the postmaster. H.A. took over the store and became postmaster in 1914. His general store burned to the ground later that year, but was quickly rebuilt and operated until he retired in 1940.

Effie Skivington came to the area from Ohio to teach school in 1908. Effie and H.A. were married in 1912. Effie taught Sunday school in Porthill, and was a talented musician. They were well thought

## Curator's Corner

Many things have happened at the Museum in the last six months. New exhibits include the firearms display, a history of the Chinese in Boundary County, H. A. French's safe, new pieces of art by local artists hanging in Portrait Hall, the Case Tractor has been cleaned and placed inside the building, new artifacts from railroad history are on display and a new garage door was installed in Portrait Hall. Each day brings new and exciting projects and artifacts, photos, books and papers to the Museum's collection. We are blessed to have so many people wanting to help preserve this history.

We had a grand time with the students from local schools, sharing the county history with them, as this is the reason we are here! I am very thankful to be a part of that experience.

The grant from BNSF and money from the Class of 1963 and the fundraising dinner have made the project of the Railroad Courtyard come to life. We knew it would be a time consuming project, but never dreamed we would have some things happen. Who would have guessed that our 100 year old sewer pipe would collapse and make the sewer backup into our bathrooms just as we had a group of 4th graders getting off the bus to visit? Funny, well not so funny, that it happened just hours before a cement pour

was scheduled. Workers were so glad we would not have to rip up new concrete! The city crew was immediately involved to help us determine the damage and a plan was formed to get us flushing again! In the process of replacing the sewer, it was discovered that the water line was rusted through, so it was replaced also. I posted on the bathroom doors that we had no indoor plumbing, but visitors were welcome to use our "outhouse" that had been provided by KG&T. Some visitors agreed, some not so much! We keep putting one foot in front of the other, and we see there is always progress.

I so want to thank all the individuals who have donated their volunteer time over the past months to many different projects. Thank you, Howard, for your diligence in forging through file after file after file. Oh how I wonder how you sleep at night with so much historical information floating in your head! Thank you to the people who have donated to the museum artifacts, photos, and funds. Thank you to the Education Committee, making our visits to schools and student's visits to the Museum run so smoothly. Without you, the museum could not function. I can only hope that we are living up to the dreams of the early pioneers and helping to preserve our Boundary County history.

*by Sue Kemmis*

of and very kind to those who needed help in any way.

H.A.'s general store carried everything one would ever need, and nothing was ever on sale. He kept chickens in his warehouse next to the store. Once a skunk went after his chickens, so he shot it with a 12 gauge shotgun and hung it in his store.

Effie tripped over a cat on the back deck of the store and fell 10 feet to the ground, puncturing a lung. She passed away as a result of the fall on September 29, 1930. It is believed that H.A.

died about 1955. Both are buried at the Porthill Cemetery.

Jim Stippich, a lifelong county resident and weekly auction goer, recognized the value of the safe and its story, purchased it at the auction, and donated it to the Museum. The safe has now gone in full circle and is on display beside the original post office boxes which had once been part of Henry A. French's store and post office.

The Museum is grateful to Mr. Stippich for this priceless addition to our Museum's story.