



VISTA NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC CONTEXT

TAG Historical Research & Consulting

VISTA NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

Prepared for
City of Boise
Planning and Development Services

By
TAG HISTORICAL RESEARCH & CONSULTING



a/b/n of The Arrowrock Group, Inc.

September 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Background.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Neighborhood Roots 1863 – 1905.....	4
Early Land Ownership and Development (1890-1910).....	6
The Eagleson Family.....	8
Transportation Networks and Streetcar Suburbs.....	12
Early 20th Century Architectural Styles.....	14
School and Community Life.....	14
Growth and Development.....	15
Large Lots and Open Spaces.....	20
Growing Pains.....	22
The Mid-Century Building Boom.....	24
The 1960s and Beyond.....	26
Conclusion.....	27
Recommendations.....	28
Bibliography.....	30

Project Background

In July 2015 the Boise City Department of Planning and Development Services requested an historical narrative of the Vista Neighborhood. The project is part of the City of Boise's Energize Our Neighborhoods campaign, which includes documenting "historical nodes," or activity centers, within the boundaries of neighborhoods. This document will provide the historic background of the neighborhood and help increase public awareness of the neighborhood as an important part of the city's history.

Vista Neighborhood Historic Context

Introduction

The Vista Neighborhood, located in Township 3N, Range 2E; Sections 21, 22, and 27, is bounded by Overland Road on the north, Federal Way on the east, Roosevelt Street on the west, and the New York Canal on the south. The neighborhood is located approximately two miles from downtown Boise on the bluff of ground known as “the Bench,” which emerges from the Boise River valley. The Vista Neighborhood shares its history with adjacent neighborhoods and with the history of Boise and surrounding Ada County.



Map Source: energize.cityofboise.org/vista

Neighborhood Roots 1863 - 1905

Early settlement in Boise took place in the fertile farming land adjacent to the river. Lack of water on the bench inhibited settlement until the advent of irrigation. The arid bench was a landmark feature for travelers on the Oregon Trail, which skirted the edge of the bench. During the 1860s and 1870s, roads to the southwest led to the mines in the Owyhee Mountains, then later to Kuna and Nampa. In 1877 an act of Congress offered a chance to patent arid land for as little as \$1.25 an acre. William B. Morris, an astute businessman who was working as manager of the Northwest Stage Lines, immediately claimed more than 7,000 acres. He also filed on water rights for a future canal. The stage was set for the development of irrigation, the impetus behind settlement in the Vista Neighborhood.¹

Morris began construction of a canal on the first bench above the south bank of the Boise River in 1877. Seven miles of canal were completed when Morris died in 1878. After his death, the capital to expand the canal system evaporated. Morris's heirs, his widow Lavinia and their nephew, William Ridenbaugh, could only afford to oversee the existing canal. They sold the canal, now known as the Ridenbaugh, and their water rights to the Central Canal and Land Company in 1889.

Meanwhile, Eastern investors became involved in plans to build another canal when New Yorker John H. Burns organized the Idaho Mining and Irrigation Company (IMIC) in 1882. Burns hired engineer Arthur De Wint Foote to craft a modern irrigation system. Foote envisioned a vast project to irrigate 480,000 acres with 32 laterals extending a total of 260 miles that transformed the arid land into valuable cropland. The project included plans for two systems, one east of the city and one to the west. Financial setbacks, including a financial panic in 1884, forced the company to sell off parts of the plan. The project on the west side was sold to J.M. Stewart and James A. McGee of Philadelphia. Stewart and McGee initiated construction of a new canal, which they named the Phyllis Canal, after McGee's daughter. Their project also failed and it was returned to the IMIC. Progress was finally made when the W.C. Bradbury Construction Company of Denver contracted to complete both sections of the canal project. By 1890 Bradbury completed 50 miles of the Phyllis Canal and six miles of the New York Canal.²

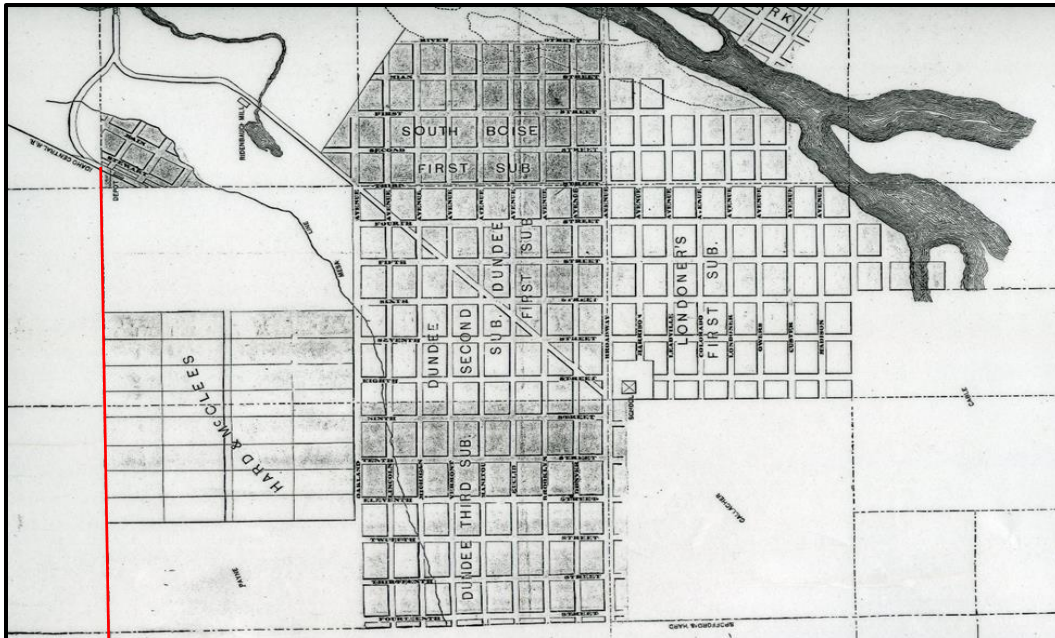
When the IMIC itself went out of business in 1894, the Bradbury Construction Company bought the Phyllis and New York Canals. The canals were then sold to the Farmers' Canal Company, a local operation. That company later consolidated into the New York Canal Company, organizers that included W.C. Annett, president, and Ernest Eagleson, chief engineer. Both men proved important to the development of the Bench. The canal project, delayed due to financial panics, mismanagement, and other issues, was finally completed in 1900.³



Constructing the New York Canal. Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) 3355

Early Land Ownership and Development (1890-1910)

In the 1890s the potential of irrigation, coupled with Idaho's transition to statehood, attracted numerous out-of-state investors to Boise. Ward P. Hard and Nelson McClees incorporated the Upland Park Investment Company in Pueblo, Colorado, in 1890 and purchased a large tract of land in Sections 15 and Sections 22, near the present-day intersection of Overland and Federal Way. The company's name, Upland, referred to its geographic location on the Bench. Hard moved to Boise and entered into business with Judson Spofford. Spofford, another land owner developer, platted the Dundee Addition on land he owned south of the river.



Colorado residents, W.P. Hard and Nelson McClees platted land in the Vista Neighborhood as shown on this 1891 map. The red line indicates the location of modern Vista Avenue. (ISHS Map G4292.S1B63 1891).

At that time, there was only one bridge across the river located near the current Boise Public Library on Capitol Boulevard. Spofford, Hard, and several other businessmen procured money and investors for a second bridge crossing near the land they owned on the south side. The construction of the new bridge opened up the south side of the river, including the Bench, for development, leading to the incorporation of the village of South Boise. The area incorporated into the village boundaries began on the south bank of the Boise River at the Broadway Bridge and continued south on Broadway to the current site of Garfield School, then west on Boise Avenue, where it connected with Capitol Boulevard (then known as 9th Street Pike). Although not within the boundaries of the incorporated village, the term South Boise also referred to all the land south of river, including land on the Bench. Although it is hard to envision, today's Vista and Depot Bench were considered part of South Boise in the late 1890s and the early 1900s. In official records such as voting precincts and census enumeration districts, residents of these two modern neighborhoods were included in South Boise, not Boise City.

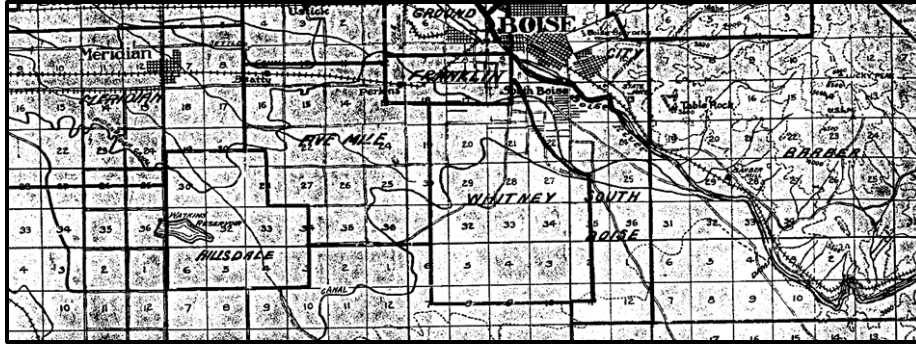
Once irrigation water was available, other early subdivisions, or additions as they were called at the time, were platted. In April of 1902, farmer Nicholas J. Brown subdivided land he owned in Section 22 (in the vicinity of Vista Avenue and Canal Street) into 10-acre lots and filed a plat for Brown's Addition. The *Idaho Daily Statesman* reported that eight of the lots were "bought or contracted for by parties who will build homes and engage in different branches of agriculture at once." Houses at 2121 and 2330 Canal Street were built not long after the subdivision was platted; they may be two of the oldest homes in the Vista Neighborhood. The house at 2330 Canal is a two-story gable front and wing house with Queen Anne style-influenced features and details. It has a front bay and asymmetrical entrance porch characteristic of the Queen Anne form, as well as the decorative shingling in the gables, spindle work porch supports, and unusual flared eaves and ornate roof knee braces on the windows.



Constructed circa 1904, 2330 Canal Street is one of the older houses within the boundaries of the neighborhood.

By the summer of 1903 there was a population boom when the completion of the New York Canal attracted settlers to the Vista Neighborhood and the surrounding area. Settlers in Sections 21, 22, 27, along with those on the north side of Overland Road, filed a petition for a school. Ada County commissioners granted the petition and established School District No. 19.

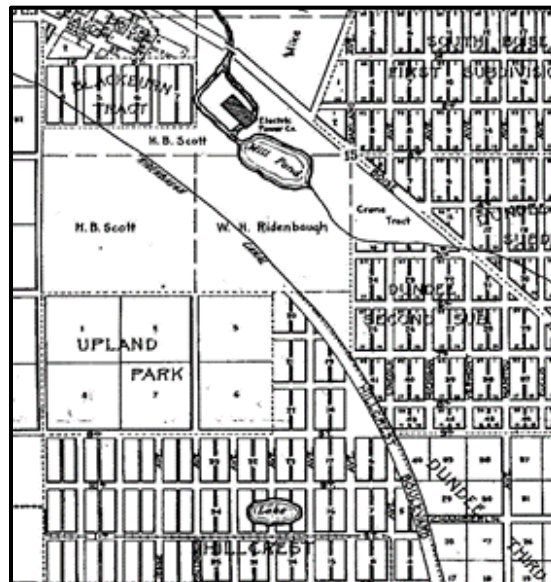
W. Grant Whitney donated an acre of land in Section 21 (Overland and Owyhee) to the new school district. Whitney, who owned a nursery in Payette, also donated shade trees for the school grounds. To thank him, residents named the building Whitney School in his honor. The area surrounding the school became known as the Whitney District. Students came not only from within the boundaries of the Vista neighborhood, but also from the north side of Overland and west to Curtis Road. In time, the name "Whitney" would identify several churches, a grocery store, social clubs, a political voting district, and a fire district.⁴



The Vista Neighborhood is within the boundaries of the Whitney voting precinct on this 1920 map of Ada County. (ISHS MapG4273.S1 A3 1920.In8)

The Vista Neighborhood grew over the next ten years as subdivisions were platted on land within the modern boundaries. Large five- and ten-acre lots were platted in some subdivisions like Brown's Addition. The Upland Park Addition, initially started with land investments by W.P. Hard and associates, was platted in 1904 and also included ten-acre lots. Over time, parts of Upland Park would be divided into the Hillcrest Subdivision. In 1912 a road was petitioned through the subdivision. The road originally called Hill Crest Road, is identified as Hillcrest Boulevard on early maps. Today Hillcrest Boulevard is named Federal Way and the Hillcrest name is associated with a country club and the neighborhood on the Bench above the New York Canal.

Because of their connection to the early developers of South Boise, the oldest platted subdivisions are found on the eastern side of the neighborhood in areas that include the edge of the Bench and adjacent low-lying land. Upland Park Addition included the area bounded by Vista, Overland and Federal Way.

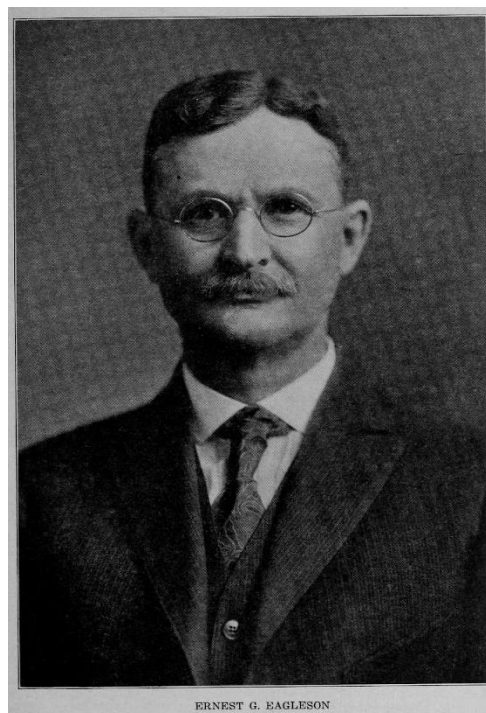


Modern Federal Way, the eastern boundary of the Vista Neighborhood, is shown as Hillcrest Boulevard on a 1909 map. (ISHS Map G4274.S1 B631909a.In8)

The Eagleson Family

Andrew Hervey (A.H.) Eagleson and his four sons would influence development in much of the Vista Neighborhood. A.H. was born in Cadiz, Ohio, southeast of Canton, in 1834. He married Martha Ann Kerr in 1861. Ten years later A. H. and Martha moved to Iowa, then to Craig, Nebraska, in 1882. In 1890, after eight years in Craig, where A. H. ran a hardware and implement business, the Eagleson family, along with several others from Craig, including A. H.'s brother George, W. C. Annett, and Christopher Hale, moved to Boise. A. H. and George partnered with Annett and W.H. Thompson and purchased a saw mill on Clear Creek, 16 miles from Boise. Later, in 1904, A. H. and his four sons started their own business, A.H. Eagleson & Sons, Limited. The corporation was formed for a variety of purposes, including agriculture, banking, ice making and storage, manufacturing and selling lumber, and selling mining stock. Individually the Eaglesons purchased large farms and tracts of land in the west side of the present-day Vista Neighborhood, property that was first farmed and ranched and later subdivided for neighborhoods.⁵

The Eagleson children had a diverse set of skills to match the needs of the corporation. Earnest, "Ern," graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in engineering in 1889. He worked as a railway construction engineer and then as a mining engineer in Wyoming. He followed his parents' move to Boise and was appointed by the Boise mayor to be city engineer, serving four non-consecutive terms. At the end of his first term, he was hired as chief engineer of construction for the reincarnated New York Canal project. Ern was elected mayor twice, serving from 1919 to 1921 and again from 1925 to 1927. He also bought the ranch known as the "Old Foote Ranch" in Section 20, land that Arthur Foote purchased in the 1880s. ⁶



Boise developer and two time mayor.
(Photo from History of Idaho: The Gem of the Mountains Vol. 2, James H. Hawley)

John William Eagleson was involved in a variety of financial and banking organizations. He served as Ada County treasurer from 1898 to 1902 and was assistant cashier at the Capitol State Bank between 1899 and 1906. John became Idaho state treasurer in 1914 and served until 1920. He served as president of the Idaho Fire Insurance Company until 1927 and then became involved in a Boise real estate business. Unlike his brothers, he moved away from Boise and died in Iowa in 1958.

Harry Kerr Eagleson started his career as a traveling hardware salesman in Sioux City, Iowa. He arrived in Boise in 1894 and partnered with Charles J. Sinsel in a fruit and produce company, shipping one of the first carloads of prunes to Europe. He worked with his father and brothers in all aspects of the corporation. He died in 1948.

Charles Eagleson attended the Nebraska Agricultural College in Lincoln and pursued civil engineering and farming, including managing the 1,200-acre Eagleson ranch, which was located west of the Vista Neighborhood. The Eagleson family specialized in cattle and hogs and grew alfalfa and various grains on the ranch. Charles and his wife, Mary, built a home in the Vista Neighborhood, where they lived until 1967. After Charles died, Mary moved to Oregon to live with their son, Craig.

Beginning in 1909 and ending in the 1930s, the Eaglesons began to subdivide their land in Section 21 in the western side of the neighborhood. The family members platted Eagleson Park, Subdivisions Nos. 1 – 4, Eagleson Park Place, and Eagleson Park Addition. The subdivisions were originally platted with numbered streets running east and west and named streets north and south. The numbered streets corresponded to streets platted in the adjoining South Boise subdivisions. When the village of South Boise was annexed to the city of Boise in 1913, the numbered streets within the village boundaries were changed to avoid conflict with other streets in the city. The early numbering system in the Vista Neighborhood would remain until the 1940s when the area was annexed to the city, also to avoid confusion.

It was not unusual for developers to use family names for streets and the Eaglesons followed that tradition. Neighborhood streets Hervey, Gourley, and Kerr are Eagleson family names. Other examples within the Vista Neighborhood include streets within the Abbs and Broxon Additions on the west side of Shoshone. Walter and Mattie Abbs platted their subdivision in 1914 and named streets after themselves. William T. Booth, who platted the Hillcrest Subdivision, and was involved in a myriad of development schemes throughout Boise and the Vista Neighborhood, named streets after his relatives and children. These include Ormond, Norville, Helen and Jessie Streets, among others.

The Eaglesons exemplify 20th century developers. With a diverse set of skills and business acumen, the family acquired large tracts of land, utilizing them first for ranches and farms and then promoting and developing them as neighborhoods as demand for housing increased. The Eaglesons developed property in other parts of Boise, including the Hillcrest Country Club and many of the neighborhoods adjacent to the club. Other developers were active in the Vista Neighborhood, but the change brought to the area by the Eagleson family have had a lasting effect.

EAGLESON PARK ADDITION

The N $\frac{1}{2}$ and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec 21, T.3N R.6E, BR $\frac{1}{2}$ M.
ADA COUNTY, IDAHO.
Containing 188.506 Acres.
Scale 200 Feet to Inch.

See Official Description of Plat
Recorded in Book 10 of Public Records
Page 523

Order of the Board of Supervisors of County of Ada, Idaho
Recording Officer of the County of Ada, Idaho
32786
27
32787
27
32788
27
32789
27

I, E. H. Eagleson do hereby certify that the above described tract of land was surveyed, shown, and divided according to the measurements, and all in the survey and plat are correct.

E. H. Eagleson
District Surveyor

Eagleson Realty Company Limited, does hereby certify that it is the owner of the following described property to wit: N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 21, T. 3N R. 6E, B. 1/2 M. Ada County, Idaho; and that said company desires to make the said lands in the plat, and the said company hereby dedicates the streets and alley shown hereon for the use of the public as follows: 1. The street shown to wit the streets hereon so hereby dedicated for sidewalk and drain purposes; 2. The roadway shown to wit the streets and alleys are hereby dedicated for the purposes of horses, and cars, or other conveyances; and for all transportation purposes, the measurements of the same shall be as follows: (1) feet from property line, and where poles and light posts will be placed at the side of the alley open. The boundary will be 11 feet from the road line; the center line will be 12 1/2 feet from property line on 12th and 13th Ave and 14th and 15th Ave; 15 feet from property line on 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Ave; 15 feet from property line on Overland Avenue; and 15 feet from property line on Overland Avenue and the other streets shown.

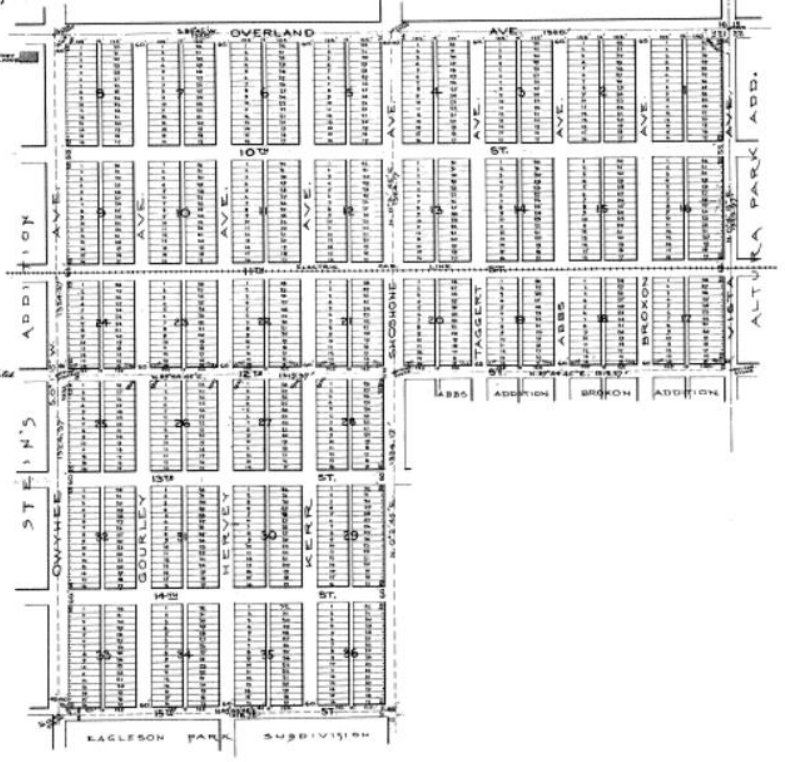
In witness whereof, Eagleson Realty Company Limited, its Board of Directors, duly organized, and acting by its secretary, and its approval, do hereby certify of the correctness of the above description, and that the same is true and correct.

Attest: John F. Eagleson, Secretary
E. H. Eagleson, President

Not. p. 244-45
County of Ada
On the 22nd day of October A.D. 1912 I, John F. Eagleson, District Surveyor, do hereby certify that the above described property is the property of the Eagleson Realty Company Limited, and that the same is the property of the Eagleson Realty Company Limited, and that the same is the property of the Eagleson Realty Company Limited, and that the same is the property of the Eagleson Realty Company Limited.

Not. p. 244-45
County of Ada
I hereby certify that this instrument was filed for record at the Register of Deeds of the County of Ada, Idaho, on the 22nd day of October A.D. 1912, at 2:30 P.M. and was recorded in Book 6 of said books at page 279.

Attest: My Office
County Clerk
By Elmy Stone, Deputy



The Eagleson Park Addition was platted in 1912 by Ernest Eagleson. (Ada County Assessor)

Transportation Networks and Streetcar Suburbs

The advent of irrigation, along with the development of an electric railway system, also spurred growth. Residential growth throughout the city was tied directly to the lines that extended from downtown to new developments on the edges of the town. Boise's streetcar system started in 1891 and by 1906 an interurban loop that linked rural communities to Boise was a reality.

Electric railway tracks didn't reach the Vista area until 1913, when the Idaho Traction Company built a line connecting the Morris Hill Line that came from downtown Boise to Morris Hill Cemetery with the South Boise line that ran down Broadway. The line extended from Broadway, down Chamberlain Street to Manitou Street, across a bridge over the Ridenbaugh Canal, and up the side of the Bench to 11th Street (Nez Perce). The track ran down the center of the street to Roosevelt where it continued north and connected to the Morris Hill line.

Named after the Hillcrest Addition, the Hillcrest Loop was initiated in the spring of 1913. The local newspaper reported that the opening of the loop was the most important accomplishment for the Idaho Traction company that year.

"This loop, which is 9.56 miles long, carries the passenger from the heart of the business district in Boise out through South Boise, up over the mesa, affording a magnificent view of the city, the valley beyond and the mountains still further beyond. It carries him through a residential district such as but few cities on the continent can boast."

Real estate firms advertised the convenience of the streetcar line within blocks of a property and touted the advantages of living on the Bench, claiming that the Bench enjoyed more sunny days than the bottom lands and that the water was superior to the "swampy water" below.⁷

DO YOU VALUE PURE AIR, GOOD DRAINAGE AND COMMANDING VIEW?

If you do, visit STEIN'S ADDITION with us. This beautiful home place is situated on the south bench, in the path of health-laden breezes. Home owners here never breathe the smoke of our industrial and business sections. It's a holiday place for your lungs. The air is so clear and sweet, you instinctively fill up your lung cells with it. That means health and vitality.

You have an unobstructed view of mountains and valley. The South Boise Loop passes through the Addition, and cars will be running regularly in the near future and you can go in either direction to the city for a nickel. Whitney schoolhouse, electric lights, irrigating water, on the Addition. City water and a railroad June 1.

The prices and terms make it available to almost anyone to buy a home site. Lots 50x125 feet deep; \$225 and up. Terms, each \$5.00 and up. You'll thank us for showing you this beautiful home site.

Great calamities as we have had in the eastern states for the last few weeks can never happen here, as the ground is 85 feet higher than Boise City proper.

We have now finished, ready to move in, two 4-room and one 6-room house, with sleeping porches, from \$1050 up. Large lots, almost any kind of terms.

We Make Terms to Suit You on the Following:

\$1400 will buy a 5-room house.	(100)
\$2400 will buy a 5-room house on North Seventh street.	(200)
\$2650, a dandy buy of a 5-room house on North 18th street.	(300)
\$1500 for a 6-room plastered house on S. 16th, \$100 cash, \$20 monthly.	(301)
\$3675 for a splendid new 5-room modern house with furnace heat.	(400)
\$5500, 7-room house, brand new, furnace heat; none better ever constructed in Boise.	(500)
\$200 per acre, 10 to 40 acres, near town; terms to suit, or will trade.	
\$4500 for 5 acres, improved, good house, barn, fruit; \$200 cash, balance like paying rent.	

THE EDWARD STEIN COMPANY, INC.
WE HAVE THE BARGAINS
109 North Tenth Street Phone 98-W

Ad for Stein's Addition. Idaho Statesman, April 18, 1913.

The electric railway was a boon to neighborhood residents, providing a convenient link from rural areas outside Boise (as Vista was at the time) to the city. Unfortunately, the Hillcrest Line was discontinued in the 1920s. The electric railway system depended on revenue from passengers and also from freight business. World War I helped spur the passenger and freight service, but by 1924, the streetcar companies in Boise were feeling the effects of the increased use of automobiles. Although companies encouraged passengers to “Use the Street Car for Business-Your Automobile for Pleasure,” the lure of individual automobile ownership was strong. As roads improved and car ownership spread, streetcar companies lost passengers in a nationwide trend. When the line between Vista and South Boise was abandoned in 1923 because it lost money, the east side of the neighborhood was cut off from the west side. Then in September 1926, service on the remainder of the Hillcrest Loop was discontinued. In time, bus service was established on some parts of the former streetcar route, but the loss of streetcar service effected many people in the area.⁸

New Car Service

Hillcrest
Commencing *Loop*

Sunday, April 27th

A new car service will be given on the Morris Hill and South Boise lines: Cars will leave the Interurban Station every hour, via Morris Hill route, from 6:30 a. m. to 11:30 p. m., and via South Boise from 7:30 a. m. to 10:30 p. m. (10:30 p. m. car goes to Third street and Broadway only.) This new line will be known as the Hillcrest Loop.

Take a ride around this 10-mile loop for 10 cents and see Boise from the beautiful hillcrest.

Idaho Traction Company

Idaho Statesman Ad for new electric railway service to the Bench. Idaho Statesman, April 26, 1913.



The tracks of the Hillcrest Loop circa 1920 are shown on Roosevelt Street near Rose Hill north of the Vista Neighborhood. ISHS 75-65-89

Early 20th Century Architectural Styles

Houses constructed in the subdivisions during the early years of the 20th century were predominantly Craftsman/Bungalow style. The popularity of the “California bungalow,” as it was known locally, boomed in the United States from about 1915 to 1930. Plan books offered many variations of the Craftsman/Bungalow. The style gained widespread popularity through publications such as *Craftsman* magazine, published in the early years of the 20th century by designer Gustav Stickley. Plans were also found in mainstream periodicals such as the *Ladies Home Journal*. Buildings with Craftsman elements are generally wood-frame construction with low-pitched gable or hipped roofs, wide eaves and exposed rafters. In 1913, the Edward Stein Company, platted Stein’s Addition in the area bounded by Overland on the north to Targee on the south, between Owyhee and Latah. The company advertised the construction in the new addition of 14 five-room modern California bungalows, which included sleeping porches and concrete front porches. Charles and Mary Eagleson constructed this type of house at 1703 Gourley. The Craftsman bungalows found throughout the neighborhood represent the homes of the earliest residents.

A MILLINER AND HER SAVINGS

Recently several notorious promoters of oil stock were arrested and many letters showing how they operated were found.

One letter was from a working girl (a milliner). She had saved \$800, very slowly, of course; she saved to start in business for herself. She needed more money. A friend told her to buy certain oil stock. The stock had been selling for \$1.50 per share. Soon after it dropped to 75 cents. Last month it would fetch only 5 cents.

MORAL: Don't Speculate in Stock

You are not speculating if you invest your savings in STEIN'S ADDITION on the new Hillcrest Loop, which you can buy from \$150 to \$200 per lot; \$3 cash, balance \$5 per month.

We have one house on the nice corner lot. 75x125, ready to move in. There are four rooms and a sleeping porch; \$1250 will take it. The easiest kind of terms. Now we have another 6-room house on an acre of ground for \$1750, close to car line, 5-cent fare; plenty of irrigating water. You name the terms.

We have just started to build 14 5-room modern California bungalows, with sleeping porches, concrete cellars, on great big 75-foot lots. These houses are 85 feet higher than Boise City. Lots are level as the floor (no alkali swamp). They will have city water piped into the bath room and kitchen, and not mud holes for a water supply. They will have cement walks, and will sell for about \$1750 each, and you name the terms.

IT IS A COPPER-RIVETED FACT, fully verified by the experience of millions of people, that nothing gives a fellow such a feeling of independence as having some property of his own, when sick or out of a job.

Remember the name of THE EDWARD STEIN CO. on the bottom of your contract is sufficient guarantee that you will be treated on the square.

THE EDWARD STEIN COMPANY, INC.
100 North Tenth Street Phone 98-W



1913 Idaho Statesman advertisement for new houses in Stein’s Addition west of Owyhee Street in the Vista Neighborhood

Charles and Mary Eagleson House at 1703 Gourley Street.

School and Community life

As the population of the Vista Neighborhood increased people needed a place to meet for social and community events. School houses were the center of activity for most rural communities and the Whitney School was no exception. Not only were classes held in the building, but it was often the site of church services, dances, lectures, and box socials. The Rev. Carl L. Bent conducted church services for the congregation of the Second Methodist Church in the school from September 1905 until a church building was constructed next door.

The Vista Neighborhood also had social and civic clubs. In June 1916 the Whitney Club, a women’s club dedicated to community service and improvement, was organized. Later known as the

Whitney Progress Club (also referred to as the Progress Club of Whitney), the club held its meetings at members' homes. Club activities included lectures on subjects from home improvement to political issues. The club held potlucks, garden tours, and food sales to raise money for causes such as raising fire funds for local residents or collecting donations to support the Children's Home. The organization also paid for street markers that were used until standardized street signs were placed. The Whitney Club was active until at least the 1960s. Mary Eagleson, wife of Charles Eagleson, moved to the neighborhood in 1906 and joined the club when it was organized, remaining an active club member until she moved to Oregon in 1967.⁹

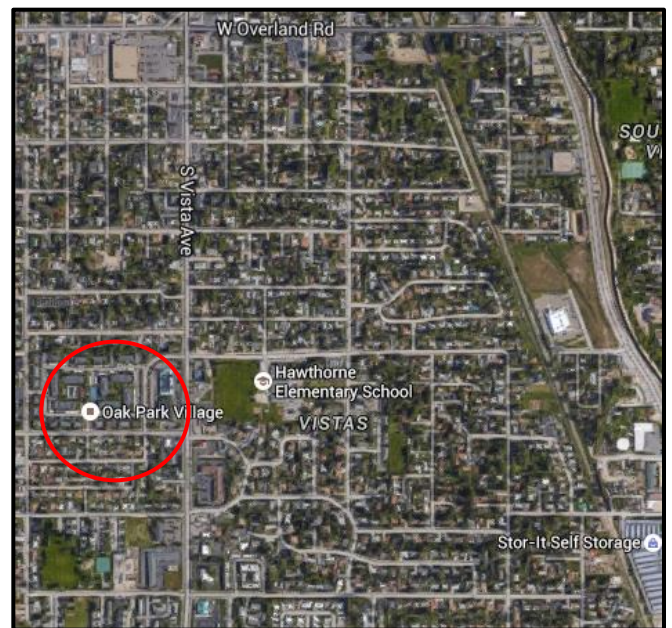
The Whitney Parent-Teacher Association, was organized as the Mothers Circle not long after the school was built. Now known as the Whitney Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), it is still an important part of the school.

Growth and Development

It would be several decades before the Vista Neighborhood evolved from a rural neighborhood to a mid-century metropolitan neighborhood. An example of this transition can be illustrated by a study of the Oak Park Village apartments located at 2888 Cherry Lane. This site was originally part of a farmstead built around 1915. The farm included a 1-1/2-story house, dairy barn, privy, well house, bunkhouse, windmill, hay derrick, root cellar, and icehouse. In 1921 assistant postmaster Charles Nelson and his wife Gertrude acquired the farm, where they ran a small dairy and bottled milk for delivery to Boise homes. Gertrude Nelson died in 1934 and her part of the farm was passed in equal portions to her children. The property went through several other transfers and was purchased in 1964 by Norm Mattefs. Mattefs sold the property to Fred Meyer, Inc. in 1982, which in turn sold to the City of Boise, which then sold it to a non-profit corporation that built Oak Park Village Apartments.¹⁰

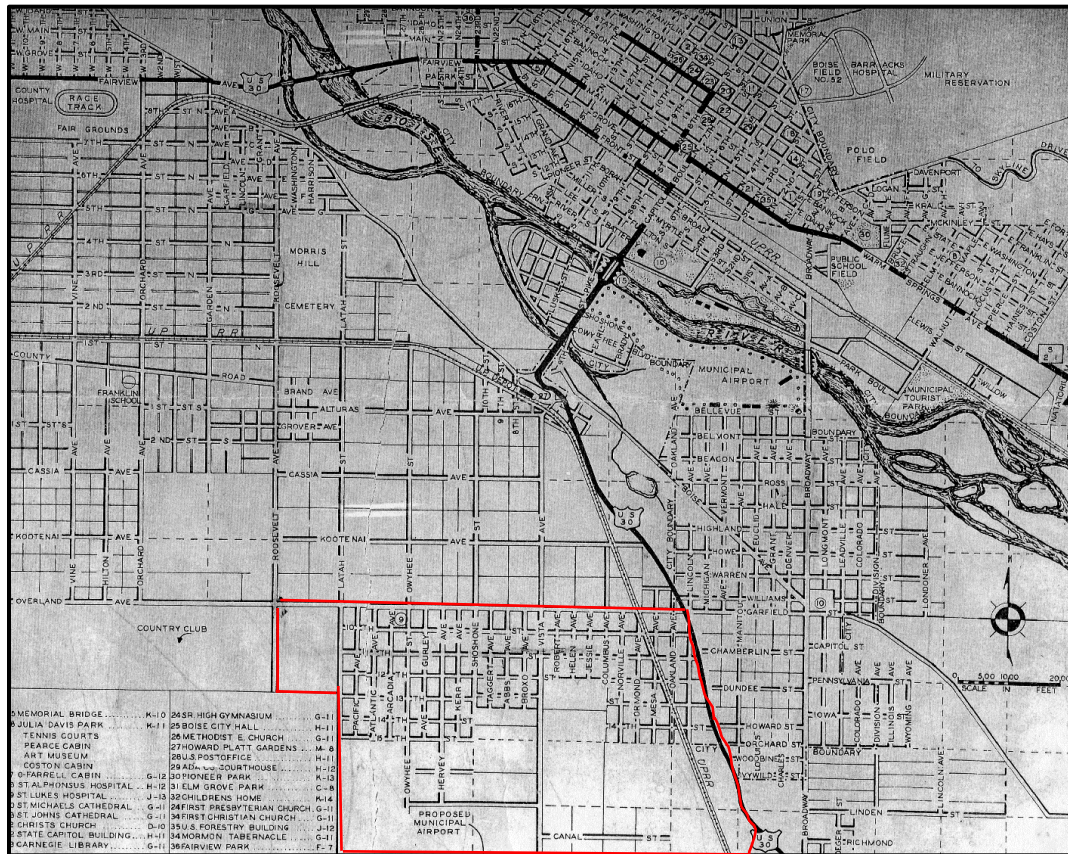


1938 Aerial Map – BUJ-10-9 Special Collections Albertson Library BSU



Google map accessed September 2015

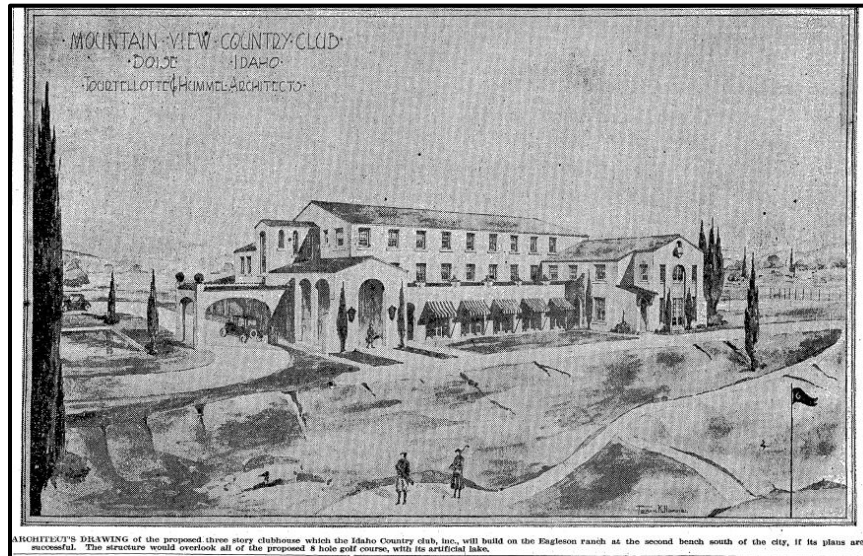
During the 1920s and 1930s growth and development of the Vista Neighborhood was influenced by several factors. Construction of mainline railroad tracks brought passengers directly to Boise without having to transfer at Nampa and Caldwell, stimulating growth in the city. The spur that extended from Orchard, southwest of Boise, bisects the eastern side of the neighborhood, creating a boundary between streets east and west of the tracks and influencing the lay out of neighborhoods. Development also coincided with nation-wide programs that helped modernize roads in and around Boise. Vista Avenue and the Old Oregon Trail Highway (US 30 and today's Federal Way) were direct corridors to downtown Boise. Improvements to these roads made it easier to access neighborhoods on the Bench.



The Vista Neighborhood (outlined in red) is shown on this 1938 map. (Courtesy of Ben Day)

In 1925, as Boise's new depot and mainline rail service were under construction, John and Harry Eagleson proposed a new country club on the old Foote ranch, known by the 1920s as the Eagleson Ranch, south of Overland and bordering Roosevelt Street. During a meeting to discuss the country club, Boise booster Peter E. Cavaney said, "Boise has been nestled here by the hills for 50 years, and the world has been going by. We are the least advertised city in the northwest. Tourists don't know of Boise. The young men are not going to stay in a town that is not going ahead. The wealthy easterners are coming west, and Boise is not getting any of them. We need to go out after these tourists and advertise."¹¹ The golf course was viewed as an asset to the growing city and another way to attract tourists to the community. Local residents supported the idea and funded the new

golf course through the sale of bonds. Construction began in 1926 and the club opened for business in June 1927. Originally known as the Idaho Country Club, the name was later changed to Hillcrest Country Club. Although the golf course is not within the boundaries of the current Vista Neighborhood, it has been a landmark for neighborhoods on the Boise Bench for almost ninety years.¹²



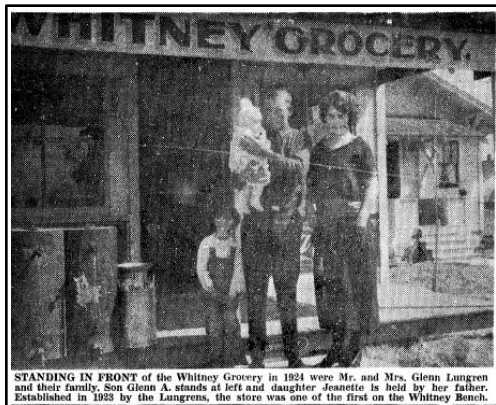
George H. Otten, a Portland architect, designed the new golf course. The original grandiose plan for the golf course, club house and associated buildings was affected by the Great Depression.

Other changes came to the neighborhood. The original Whitney School burned down and was replaced by a modern rectangular four-room school designed by Wayland & Fennell, a Boise architectural firm. The new school, designed as a reinforced concrete building with a stucco finish, was a departure from the usual two-story brick design. Brick was traditionally used in construction of Boise schools, but a concrete building cost less. The school opened in 1926 and was enlarged in 1936 by the addition of wings on the north and south sides of the building. The school was enlarged again in 1946 due to the postwar population boom. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. In 2009, the school was demolished and replaced by a new building at the same location.



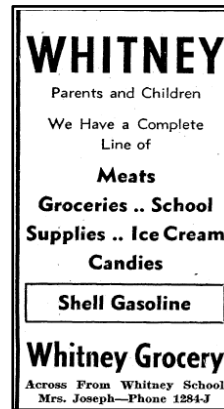
Whitney School (1926) building details. (Boise Architecture Project)

Overland Road, originally 6th Avenue South, was the location of several new homes, but also became the site of several commercial businesses. Glenn Lungren and his wife Selma moved to the Boise in 1923. The following year they purchased a building on the southeast corner of Overland Road and Owyhee Street and opened the Whitney Grocery, one of the few stores on the Bench. In addition to groceries and supplies, the store sold gasoline. The 20' x 30' store building with a kitchen and sleeping porch at the back, faced west toward Whitney School. The site was used as a store until the 1960s. Another neighborhood store, the Overland Grocery, was located at 3209 Overland.¹³ The Vista Market, advertised as the “Biggest Little Store on The Bench,” was located at 1615 Vista in the 1940s and 1950s. Although outside the boundaries of the Vista Neighborhood, “Ash Market” at the northeast corner of Overland and Roosevelt was another neighborhood store.¹⁴



STANDING IN FRONT of the Whitney Grocery in 1924 were Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Lungren and their family. Son Glenn A. stands at left and daughter Jeanette is held by her father. Established in 1923 by the Lungrens, the store was one of the first on the Whitney Bench.

Glen and Selma Lungren in front of Whitney Grocery
(June, 2 1963 Idaho Statesman)

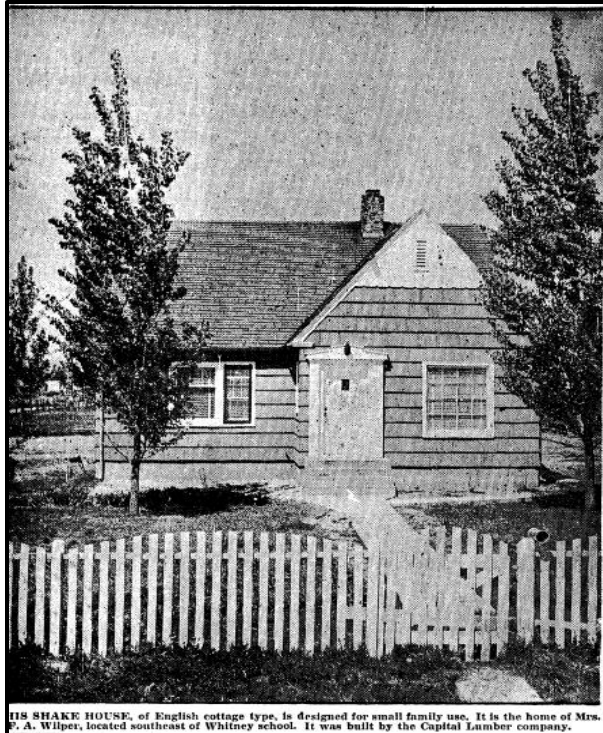


1938 Idaho Statesman ad

The growth the Vista and other Bench neighborhoods during the 1920s slowed with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 and remained stagnant for several years. In an attempt to loosen the grip of the economic depression, Congress enacted the National Housing Act of 1934 to “...improve nationwide housing standards, provide employment and to simulate industry, improve conditions with respect to home mortgage financing, and to realize a greater degree of stability in residential construction.”¹⁵

The legislation accomplished all of this and more. Under the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), generous loan programs brought home financing within the reach of a broad range of the American population. By 1935 Works Progress Administration and other federal recovery measures, combined with an influx of Dust Bowl refugees and displaced farmers, increased Boise’s population, which led to the need for new construction. The FHA also was involved in house design and emphasized economical, simple designs that were promoted locally by the Boise Payette Lumber Company and other local lumber companies.¹⁶

During the 1920s the Better Homes Movement, a nationwide campaign for home ownership, modernization, and beautification, took off because of a shortage of homes following WWI. Throughout the nation communities celebrated “Better Homes Week” with dozens of home plans, remodel and home improvement suggestions advertised in local newspapers. Boise was an active participant in the movement and ‘Better Homes Week’ was celebrated for decades.



THIS SHAKE HOUSE, of English cottage type, is designed for small family use. It is the home of Mrs. F. A. Wilper, located southeast of Whitney school. It was built by the Capital Lumber company.

This house appeared in an *Idaho Statesman* ad for Better Homes Week in 1939.



The house at 3116 W. Cherry Lane has been modified but retain elements of its original construction.

Houses on Overland Road, Vista, and other neighborhood streets are examples of house styles that evolved from the Craftsman Bungalow to the Tudor Revival style popular in the 1930s. The Tudor Revival style was relatively uncommon before World War I, but became popular during the 1920s and 1930s. Several lumber stores carried plan books that several Boise contractors and builders used for both inspiration and direction. The Tudor Revival house is characterized by a steeply pitched gable roof, faux half-timbering, and an asymmetrical entrance. Houses featuring the

elements of the Tudor Revival style were built throughout the Vista area and in other parts of Boise. Real estate ads referred to the style as “the English Style” and called it “strictly modern.” Examples of this house style can be seen (shown below) at 3601 Overland Road and 1611 Pomander Road.

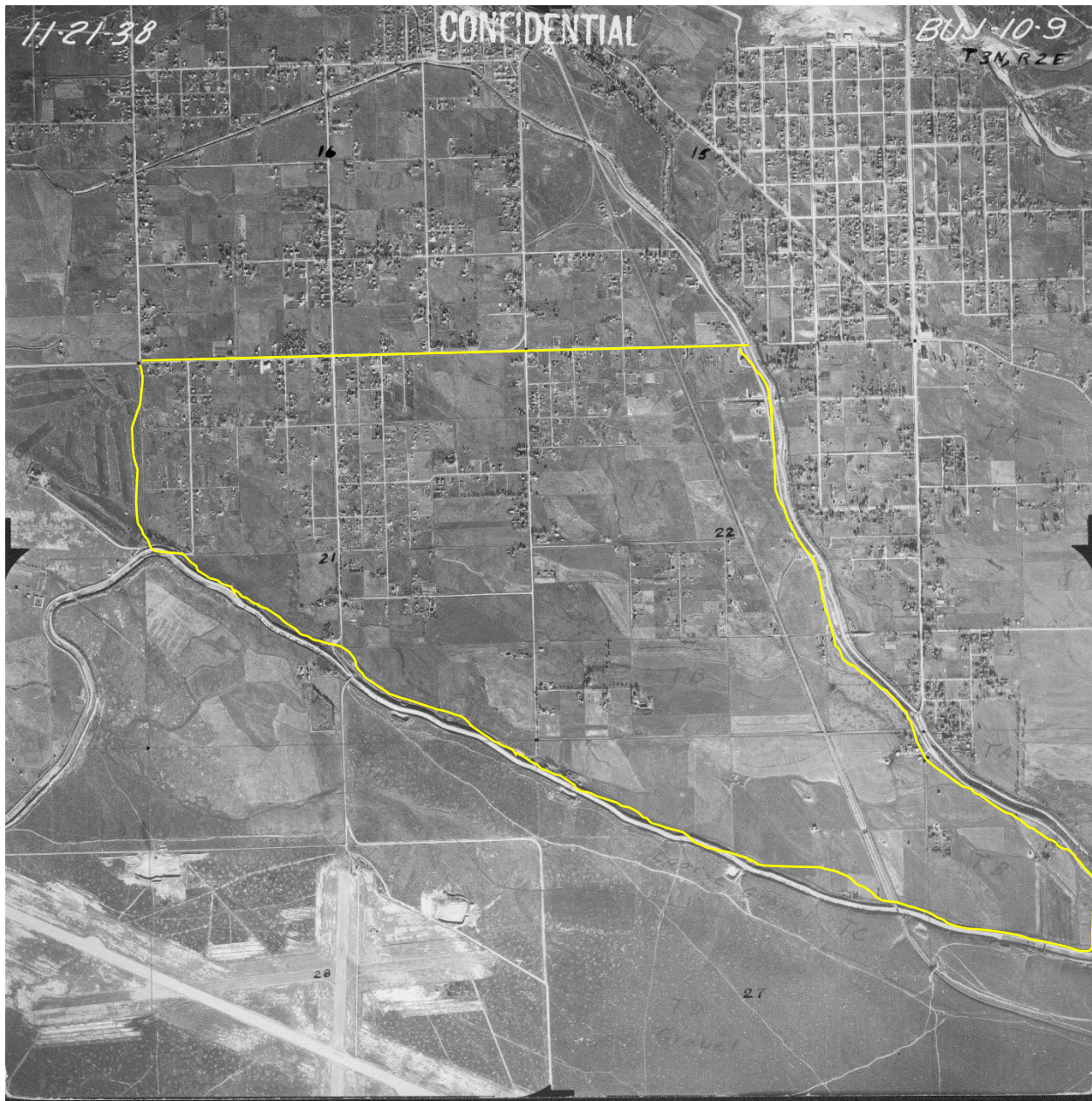


Examples of the Tudor Revival style can be seen on many streets throughout the Vista Neighborhood.



Large lots and open spaces

Even with new house construction during the 1930s and 1940s the Vista Neighborhood retained its rural ambience. Homes on Overland were placed on large lots. Numerous farms were located along Vista Road and as shown on 1938 aerial maps, large tracts of land were still undeveloped. Much of the Vista Neighborhood (outlined below)remained this way until the late 1960s and early 1970s.



CANNED FROM THE BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS -- AERIAL PHOTO COLLECTION

During the 1940s new homes built in the neighborhood included simple houses built in the Minimal Traditional style, loosely based on simplified forms of the Tudor and Colonial Revival styles from the 1920s and 1930s. Others included the early Ranch-style house, a simple brick structure with projecting gabled wing. The economical design, fashioned to meet the FHA guidelines, became a popular building style.



Open space to the south of the neighborhood would eventually become the site of a new airport when the old airport located adjacent to the Boise River (now the campus for Boise State University) could not accommodate larger planes. In 1936 Boise City began to buy and lease land for a new airport. During World War II, the Army Air Corps leased the field for use as a training base for the B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator bomber crews. Vista, then a dirt road, was paved. Finally in 1946 the field was turned over to the City of Boise. Vista Avenue became the primary gateway to the airport.

Growing Pains

The larger Whitney District was facing growing pains. By 1940 Whitney School was overcrowded. Additions to the school in 1936 provided for new classrooms, but more were still needed. Trustees of the Boise Independent School District made a request to the City Council to open Garfield Street and extend it to connect with Overland Road. The board made the request in order to allow children living on the Bench east of Vista Avenue to be sent to Garfield School, relieving the crowded conditions at Whitney. Unfortunately, Garfield Street was not opened. Whitney School was later enlarged. Although there had been limited house construction south of Nez Perce Street, new buildings were constructed during the 1940s, including the Whitney Methodist Community Center (3309 Overland), Latter-Day Saints Third Ward (3619 Overland), and Friends Community Church (3120 Palouse). In 1952 Whitney Baptist Church was founded at the corner of Jessie and Dorian Streets. The churches, like the school, provided locations for community events and neighborhood meeting places.

Developers were optimistic about growth in the area and platted more subdivisions over the next decade, including several on the east side of Vista. These included Sorensen Subdivision (1939) platted by Lon and Mable Sorensen and the Hale Subdivision (1946) platted by members of the Eagleson family. When construction picked up after World War II, new housing stock included single- and multiple-family homes. One such building was constructed in 1948 at 3326 Nez Perce Street, just a block south of Whitney School. The four-unit apartment building was constructed of brick in the new Ranch style and included washing machines and parking adjacent to the building.¹⁷



3326 Nez Perce Street

Newcomers to the area could still find lots of open space. Neighborhood resident Florine Stephenson moved to a new home on Palouse Street in 1948 with her husband, who worked at Overland Lumber. Mrs. Stephenson recalled that due to the high cost of lumber and other building materials following World War II, few homes were in the area. Her children grew up in the neighborhood and had plenty of space to play. Her home was located near Hillcrest Golf Course and her children would sled there in the winter and played with other neighborhood kids at Whitney School.¹⁸

The Vista Neighborhood encompasses a large geographic area. Federal Way, the eastern boundary, was the major route into Boise from the late 1920s until Interstate 84 was constructed. Federal Way was originally part of US 30, the main route for travelers heading west to Oregon. Houses built on the road include 1819 Federal Way (1925) and 1735 Federal Way (1947). Because the road was the highway, several motels and/or tourist courts were also built. The Ralfroy Motel at 2223 S. Federal Way (1950) was built by the father and son team of Roy and Ralph Anderson. The original motel, constructed of pumice block faced with brick, had seven units with kitchens. The Andersons built a home adjacent to the motel and lived there for several years. Federal Way was also the location of The Broadway, a drive-in movie theater that opened in 1950. This mix of residential and commercial businesses along a major transportation route makes the Vista Neighborhood unique.¹⁹

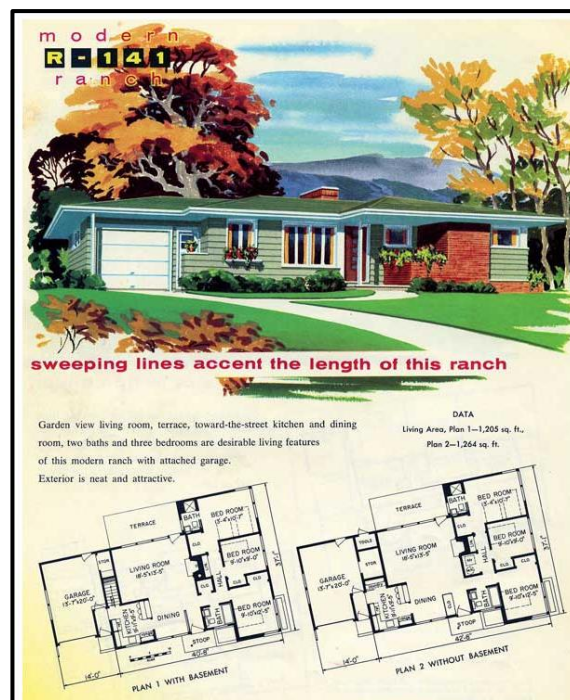


The Ralfroy Motel as shown in the Idaho Statesman, January 4, 1950.

The Mid-Century Building Boom

In 1950 the Day Realty Company built 40 homes on a 20-acre tract south of Cherry Lane and Vista, which they platted as Cherry Lane Subdivision. A few years later, in 1954, the company added to the subdivision and built another 20 plus homes on Kathryn and surrounding streets. Ernest G. Day and his company are well known as local real estate agents and developers. The family may be best known for the construction of Vista Village just north of the Vista Neighborhood. The main shopping area for the Vista Neighborhood, Vista Village is considered Idaho's original planned residential and shopping area. The Day Company built hundreds of homes in the Vista Neighborhood, and surrounding Bench areas. Many of the homes the firm built were Ranch-style, including houses in the Cherry Lane subdivisions.²⁰

The house style would be popular throughout Boise and originated in California in the 1930s. Architects Cliff May, H. Roy Kelley, William W. Wurter, and others adapted the traditional housing of southwest ranches, haciendas, and Spanish Colonial revival styles to a suburban house type suitable for middle-income families. The style combined elements of vernacular houses with the Craftsman/Bungalow and Frank Lloyd Wright's early Prairie house. Ranch-style houses typically featured a low-pitched roof with deep eaves and a low horizontal profile. California architects introduced the "close to the ground" ranch, finding inspiration in the one-story plan of the Spanish rancho of the Southwest. By the late 1940s this new house type, perceived as modern and unpretentious, caught on across the country. Promoted by *Sunset Magazine* between 1946 and 1958, and featured in portfolios such as *Western Ranch Houses* (1946) and *Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May* (1958), the style gained considerable attention in the Southwest and across the nation.



Typical Ranch house plan

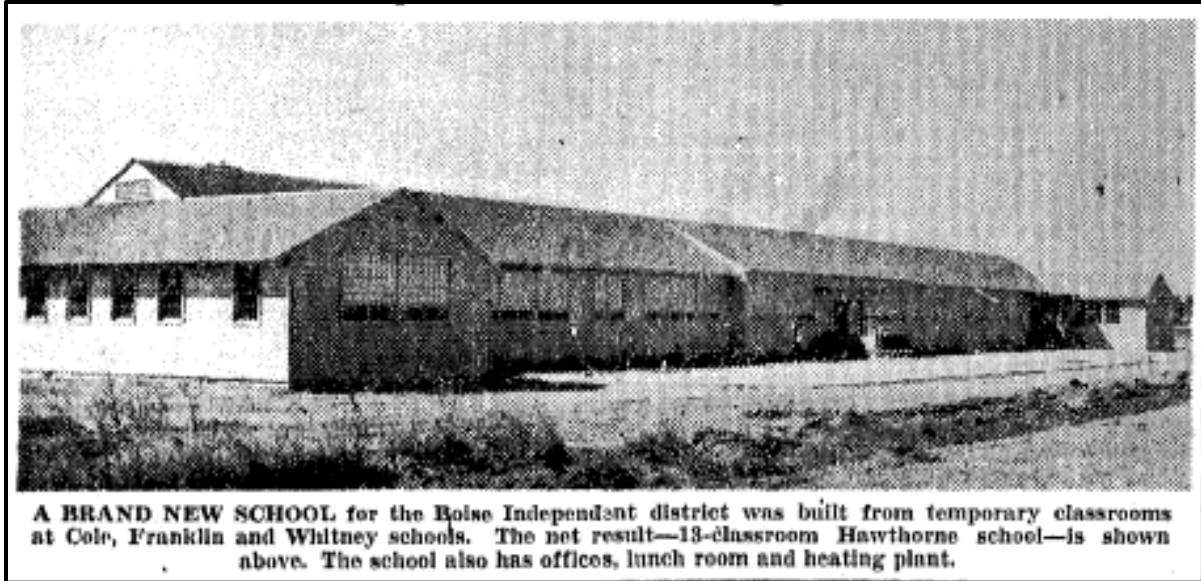
[http://www.antiquehome.org/House\[Plans/1956-National/NR-141.htm](http://www.antiquehome.org/House[Plans/1956-National/NR-141.htm)

The Ranch house was simple and inexpensive to build. The typical Ranch house has one story with a rectangular or L-shaped plan and low-pitched roof. It generally has no true porch, but rather a simple extended eave over the entry. Decorative elements are often limited to ornate iron porch posts or wooden shutters. The wide side of the house faces the street and gives the appearance of spaciousness. With its open kitchen/living area, the Ranch, specifically geared for casual entertaining, also features desirable indoor/outdoor living space. Numerous Ranch style houses were built throughout the neighborhood, but the highest concentration can be found in the subdivisions at the south end of Vista, Cherry Lane subdivision as described above, and also across Vista in the Norcrest Subdivision platted in 1958. These neighborhoods represent two things: the postwar baby boom and the need for housing and the popularity and availability of the automobile that allowed people to live farther from downtown and work.



Ranch Style houses are located throughout the neighborhood. These houses are on Overland and Kathryn streets.

A new elementary school was needed within the boundaries of the Vista Neighborhood by the 1950s. Lots within the new subdivisions of the Day Company and other developers were rapidly filling with new homes. To accommodate the new families moving in and to relieve overcrowding at Whitney School, a new elementary school was planned for the southeast corner of Targee Street and Vista Avenue. The school was built from old World War II barracks recycled from Gowen Field. The barracks were moved from the army airfield following the war and used as portable classrooms at Cole, Franklin, and Whitney Schools. They would be repurposed again and assembled into a “new” school by C.B. Lauch Construction Company. The 13-classroom school, named “Hawthorne,” opened to students in September 1951.²¹ Five years later a new school was built. The repurposed barracks were inadequate; students had to endure leaking roofs and faulty plumbing. The architects designed an 18-room school, but because of a lack of funds, only five rooms were built in 1956, with the remaining 13 built five years later, in 1961. In 1988 and 1989 the school was completely remodeled inside and out and a new hipped roof was constructed.²² Like Whitney School, Hawthorne and its grounds are actively utilized by neighborhood residents.



The completed Hawthorne School was highlighted in the Idaho Statesman when it opened for the Fall session in 1951. (IDS, September 3, 1951)

The 1960s and Beyond

The Vista Neighborhood was outside city limits until the 1960s. The area north of Targee Street was annexed into the City of Boise in 1962, followed by the remainder of the area in 1964, with the exception of a small portion south of Victory Road, which was annexed in 1986. In the 1960s an interchange at the end of Vista Avenue connected to the new interstate. Proximity to the interstate increased traffic on Vista and created a demand for gas stations and motels, many of which were built along the southern end of Vista. Commercial development increased at the intersection of Overland and Vista as well. As more businesses moved to the area, some private residences were converted to businesses or replaced by commercial buildings.

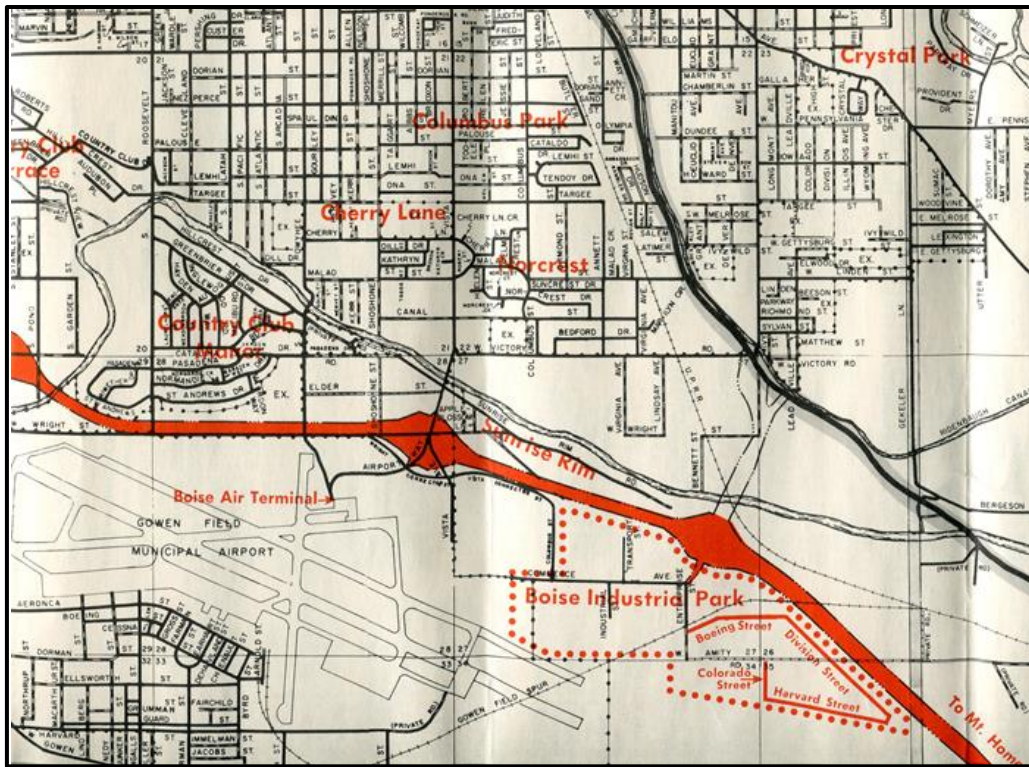
Much of the Vista Neighborhood was developed by the 1960s, but pockets of open land remained, including a five-acre piece of land in the Home Acres Subdivision on the west side of Vista. The land, owned by Max and Lydia Browning, was sold to the city in 1972. It is now the site of Shoshone Park, the only city park within the neighborhood boundaries.

The Vista Neighborhood, like other neighborhoods in Boise, has gone through a cycle of change. In the 1990s neighborhood residents actively worked with city officials to develop a comprehensive plan to guide the development of the neighborhood over the next 20 years. The plan summarized the neighborhood's development and recommended a new vision of the neighborhood and its links to the city of Boise.

Conclusion

The complex history of the Vista Neighborhood is rooted in the unique relationship between the development of irrigation and transportation. The neighborhood history can be traced through the built environment. The neighborhood's early agricultural roots are evident in the large swath of land between the New York Canal and Victory Road. Houses dating from the early 1900s are found on

Canal Street. Development between 1900 and 1910 is illustrated by the homes constructed in the area around Gourley, Kerr, and Nez Perce, evidence of the impact of the Eagleson family's influence. The neighborhood is bisected by Vista Avenue, the primary gateway to Boise from Interstate 84. Rail lines on the east side, coupled with Federal Way, the major transportation route to the city until Interstate 84 was built, have created a neighborhood unique in Boise. Overland Road and Roosevelt Street create solid boundaries that separate the neighborhood from others to the north and west. Although the streets form a physical separation, the Vista Neighborhood shares its history with other Bench neighborhoods that also developed due to the availability of irrigation and transportation routes that led to them. Each of these neighborhoods has combined to shape the history of Boise as a whole.



Columbus Park, Cherry Lane, and Norcrest subdivisions are highlighted on this 1969 Boise Chamber of Commerce map.

Recommendations

1. An important step to consider is an Historic Resources Survey of the neighborhood. Such surveys including photographing each building, followed by research in city, county, and other records. The information gathered in a survey will help determine which buildings are historically or architecturally significant; information which can be used by neighborhood residents, planners, and elected official in making decisions and plans about the future of the neighborhood.
2. Topics such as neighborhood businesses, mobile home parks, open spaces, and road development, all covered briefly in this report would benefit from more intensive documentation, including oral history interviews with long-time residents, property developers, and business owners.
3. The information in this report, combined with the additional findings in Recommendation 2, can be used to develop an overlay map illustrating changes in land use and the development of the neighborhood over time.

END NOTES

¹ Numerous books and articles cover the history of irrigation in Idaho. Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*, provides an *Prosperity in Isolation: Boise, Idaho 1882-1910* Carol McGregor and Mary Hallock Foote's autobiography, *A Victorian Gentlewoman in the West* provide comprehensive information about irrigation in Boise and the surrounding county.

² Carol MacGregor. *Prosperity in Isolation, Boise, Idaho 1882-1910*. 48-50. John Martinson, "Dare to Dream: Idaho Mining and Irrigation Company and the New York Canal" City of Boise, Public Works, entry posted June 4, 2013, <http://publicworks.cityofboise.org/blog/2013/06/dare-to-dream-idaho-mining-and-irrigation-company-and-the-new-york-canal/> (accessed September, 2015)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Idaho Daily Statesman. September 23 and 28, 1903.

⁵ Idaho Daily Statesman, Articles of Incorporation, A.H. Eagleson and Sons, 1904.

⁶ The Beginning of the New York Canal," *Reference Series No. 190*, Idaho State Historical Society (March 1972). *History of Idaho: Gem of the Mountains*,. Vol. II James Hawley

⁷ Idaho Daily Statesman. "Traction Lines to be Extended during Year", January 1, 1914, p. 4.

⁸ Idaho Daily Statesman. "Traction Company Will Discontinue Hillcrest Service", August, 18, 1926, p.3.

⁹ Idaho Daily Statesman The Bench Mirror. August 1, 1957, p.1-B.

¹⁰ Vista Vision Neighborhood Plan. Development Services Department, Boise, Idaho. 1999 pp 4 - 5

¹¹ Idaho Daily Statesman. "Golf Dinner at Owyhee Becomes Booster Affair." July 10, 1925 p. 2

¹² The complete history of the golf course can be found in "A History of Hillcrest Country Club 1940-2000" Russell M. Tremayne.

¹³ Idaho Daily Statesman. "Lungrens Came to Visit, Remained, Opened Store" June 2, 1963 p.5

¹⁴ Oral History interview. Florine Stephenson, April 30, 2014. Boise City Arts and History Department.

¹⁵ TAG Historical Research & Consulting, City of Boise Historic Resource Inventory, Survey #2 Depot Bench and Crescent Rim, 2011.

¹⁶ Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960. National Register Bulletin, 2002

¹⁷ Ada County Assessor Records. "Fine Apartment Adorns Bench" The Bench Mirror

¹⁸ Stephenson interview.

¹⁹ Idaho Daily Statesman, January 4, 1950, p. 12.

²⁰ The Bench Mirror, August 1, 1957 pp1-B, 2-b, 6-b.

²¹ This was the second school named Hawthorne in the Boise School District. The first was built in 1900 to serve students in the East End neighborhood. It was torn down in 1950.

²² Idaho Daily Statesman, July 12, 1951 p. 7; September 9, 1951, p. 12. Boise School District Website <http://hawthorne.school.boiseschools.org/>

Bibliography

Ames, David L. "Interpreting Post-World War II Suburban Landscapes as Historic Resources." Originally published in *Preserving the Recent Past*, edited by Deborah Slaten and Rebecca A. Schiffer, Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995. Available online: www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/Ames.pdf

The Bench Mirror. Boise 1957.

The Boise Gazette. Boise. 1958-1959

The Boise Journal. 1952-1962

Hawley, James. *History of Idaho: The Gem of the Mountains* Vols 1 -4. The S.J. Clark Publishing Company, Chicago. 1920.

Idaho Daily Statesman, clippings, vertical file, Research Library, Idaho State Archives, Idaho State Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

Jackson, Kenneth T. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985.

McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1984.

McCormick, Kyle. *Boise's Growth Following World War II*. Unpublished report. (TAG office)

McMichael, Stanley L. *Real Estate Subdivisions*. New York:Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1949.

Neil, J.M *City Limits*. Unpublished material, received from Boise State University.

Sunset Western Ranch Houses by the Editors of *Sunset Magazine*. Santa Monica, California: Hennessy & Ingalls, 1998 reprint.

Vista Vision Neighborhood Plan. Development Services Department. Boise, Idaho. 1999

Weiss, Marc. *The Rise of the Community Builders*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987