Rathdrum served as Kootenai County's seat from July 16, 1883 until Nov. 3, 1908. Rathdrum Main Street, Nov. 24, 1908.

Kootenai County Takes Shape - 1864-1915
by Robert Singletary

On March 4, 1863, as the Civil War was in progress, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Organic Act, which created Idaho Territory. The new territory, with Lewiston as temporary capital, included the present states of Idaho, Montana and most of Wyoming. The First Territorial Legislature created five very large counties: Alturas, Boise, Idaho, Nez Perce and Shoshone. When Montana Territory was created on May 26, 1864, it included a large portion of Idaho Territory west of the continental divide and east of the Bitterroot Range, which resulted in the panhandle shape of the northern part of Idaho Territory.

Kootenai County Created, Seneacquoteen Named County Seat

The Second Territorial Legislature created three new counties, Ada, Oneida and Kootenai, on December 22, 1864. Kootenai County was created from the northern part of Nez Perce County, which bordered Canada on the north, Washington Territory on the west and Montana Territory on the east. The southern border of Kootenai County was at the 48th parallel, which crossed the southern end of Lake Pend Oreille. The new county was named after the Kootenai Indians who inhabited the northern portion of Idaho Territory and southeastern British Columbia. Over the years it has been said and written that Kootenai means "water people." Today tribal people who speak the native tongue call themselves Ktunaxa, which English-speaking people, including the early fur traders, had difficulty pronouncing correctly. Thus the Anglicized versions of Ktunaza, including Kootenai, Kutnai, and Kootenay, came into common use.

In addition to creating and naming the new county

the Legislature chose Seneacquoteen, a small village and ferry crossing on the southern shore of the Pend Oreille River, as the first county seat. Seneacquoteen, located just across the river from present day Laclede, had been a popular river crossing for hundreds of years by the Pend Oreille Indians. Seneacquoteen means "crossing" in the Pend Oreille language, a dialect of the Salish language, spoken by the Coeur d'Alene, Flathead and Spokane Indians.

During the 1800s, the old Indian trails and the crossing at Seneacquoteen were used by the early fur traders, then by surveyors and finally by gold miners and settlers. The first ferry was built and operated by Thomas Forde in 1860. In 1864, gold was discovered on Wild Horse Creek, just across the border in British Columbia. Hundreds of gold seekers traveled from Walla Walla along the Mullan Road and crossed the Spokane River on Antoine Plante's Ferry, just a few miles west of present day Post Falls. There they turned north passing or maybe stopping at Charles Conner's ranch near present day Rathdrum and then on north to Seneacquoteen. After taking the ferry across the Pend Oreille River they continued north and crossed the Kootenai River on Edwin Bonner's Ferry. The trail from Bonner's Ferry took them across the Canadian border to the Wild Horse mines.

Kootenai County Enlarged

On January 9, 1867, the Territorial Legislature passed several amendments to the original act that created Kootenai County in 1864. Section 2 of these amendments expanded the southern border of the county to what is now Latah County. This created an area of 8,300 square miles, which was equal to the states of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware. Section 3 stated that when the county had 50 or more inhabitants they could petition the governor to appoint three commissioners, who in turn could appoint suitable residents for various county officers. Section 4 gave the appointed commissioners the authority to locate the county seat.

Even though hundreds people came through Kootenai County on their way to the gold fields in British Columbia, there were not enough permanent residents in 1867 to petition for a county government. By that time the Wild Horse gold rush was over. The nation's economy was devastated by the Civil War. The Mullan Road, a military road bringing miners and settlers into the area was in need of repair. The Northern Pacific Railroad's schedule to build a transcontinental rail line through the Pacific Northwest was placed on hold. Due to these conditions not much growth happened in Kootenai County for more than ten years.

By the late 1870s the nation's economy was beginning to improve and the movement west was

picking up momentum. By 1880 the population of Kootenai County was over 300 people. As the population increased and towns began to grow some of the citizens saw a need for a county government. In July, 1881 two merchants, George B. Wannacott and Marcus D. Wright, called a meeting of interested residents to discuss that possibility. The first meeting was held in Wannacott's store two miles west of Fort Coeur d'Alene, which was still under construction. In October a final meeting was held in Rathdrum. A petition to create a county government was completed and sent to Governor John B. Neil, who eventually appointed Oscar F. Canfield, J.T. Rankin and William Martin as the first county commissioners. The county officers appointed by the commissioners were: sheriff, Fred Haines; recorder, George B. Wannacott; assessor and collector, Marcus D. Wright; probate Judge, A.L. Bradbury; justices, R.W. Collins and C.W. Wood and constables, J.L. Steen and William Martin. The official county meetings and court were held in a small store until an official court house was built in 1889.

In 1885 there was some disagreement among certain county officers about the official location of the county seat. According the amendment of 1867 the county commissioners had the authority to name the county seat. Some of the officers believed the first county commissioners did not officially select Rathdrum as the county seat. There were a few who wanted the county seat to be located in Coeur d'Alene, including H.H. Newhall and George Wannacott. For about three months the issue became so heated that citizens guarded the county records in fear they would be taken to Coeur d'Alene. That never happened and the struggle gradually calmed down. Rathdrum remained the legal seat of Kootenai County.

The completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad and the construction of Fort Coeur d'Alene had a major impact on the growth of Kootenai County. By 1884 the population was over 2,000. Thriving new towns were springing up, along the railroad line, including Rathdrum, the most populated town in the county. The discovery of gold and silver in the Coeur d'Alene Mountains brought thousands of people to the area. In the mid to late 1880s a new railroad and steamboat transportation system connected the Northern Pacific Railroad to the mining district, via Coeur d'Alene and Lake Coeur d'Alene.

In 1890 Idaho progressed from territorial status to statehood. The growth in Kootenai County continued. In the early 1890s the Great Northern Railroad came through the county and the Union Pacific built a more direct, efficient route into the Coeur d'Alene mining district. This new line, along with the closing of Fort Sherman, had a negative impact on the town of Coeur d'Alene for a few years. By 1900 that would change drastically.

In 1898 the Federal Government released the results of a geographical survey concerning the abundance of marketable timber resources in certain sections of the Pacific Northwest, included northern Idaho. Almost immediately major eastern-based lumber companies sent out agents to purchase land and build their empires. By the early 1900s a major timber boom was in full bloom in Kootenai County. Many towns in the county, especially those situated on a river or a lake, such as Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint, Bonners Ferry, St. Maries, Harrison, Post Falls and Priest River, began to grow, especially Coeur d'Alene. In 1900 the population of Coeur d'Alene was 518. In 1905 it was over 5,000.

Rathdrum Grows after Becoming the County Seat

The establishment of Rathdrum as the first organized county seat in Kootenai County, along with the building of the Northern Pacific and the discovery of gold in the Coeur d'Alene Mountain, helped make the young settlement the most populated area in the new county. News of the new rail line and the establishment of a station in the emerging village brought more settlers to the area. Just a few months before Rathdrum became the official county seat, Charles Westley Wood and M.D. Wright plated the town site. Within a short time the village had a post office, a livery stable and a general store.

The most accessible route to the new gold discovery was via the Northern Pacific Railroad to Rathdrum, then from Rathdrum to Coeur d'Alene City on Lake Coeur d'Alene. Once in Coeur d'Alene City two routes into the gold fields were possible: the old Mullan Road over the Fourth of July Pass or steamboat from Coeur d'Alene City, up the Coeur d'Alene River to the Old Mission, then on to the gold mines.

Rathdrum became the primary outfitting point for the prospectors heading for the gold mines, and as a result became a very prosperous town with a population of over 800 by 1884. Rathdrum suffered a major setback on October 27, 1884 when a fire destroyed most of the town. However, the discovery of silver in the Coeur d'Alene Mountains prompted the town to begin immediate reconstruction. The first ore shipments from the silver mines were transported by wagon to Northern Pacific Railroad at Rathdrum, loaded onto to rail cars and shipped to smelters out of the area. By 1886 Rathdrum was again the major commercial center of northern Idaho.

Rathdrum's booming reconstruction period continued until D.C. Corbin, with the backing of the Northern Pacific Railroad, built a railroad from Hauser Junction to Coeur d'Alene City. Another railroad was constructed from the Old Mission on the Coeur d'Alene River into the mining district. The two railroads were connected by a fleet of steamboats. When this new route began operating, Rathdrum was no longer the main connecting point to the mining district.

Although Corbin's rail-steamboat-rail system carried most of the mining traffic, Rathdrum continued to develop. By the early 1890s the town became incorporated, plus a new court house, jail, several stores and a large hotel had been constructed. Telephone service was established in 1896. During the late 1890s and early 1900s agriculture was developing south and west of the city. By 1908 Rathdrum had a variety of stores in the downtown area, plus two banks, five churches, two telephones exchanges, a brick grade school and high school, two railroad depots, three hotels, two parks, and a fraternal hall and opera house.

Kootenai is Abolished

In early 1900s there was a movement created by political and business leaders, mostly from Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint, who promoted the idea that Kootenai County was too large to be governed from a small isolated village with inadequate and outdated facilities. This movement led to the creation of the controversial Spaulding bill which was passed by the senate in March, 1905. The bill abolished Kootenai County and created Lewis and Clark Counties with county seats in Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint. Opponents of the bill, especially in Rathdrum, maintained that the State Legislature did not have the power to abolish a county seat. Within a few days after the bill was signed into law the county division issue was brought before the state Supreme Court. On March 31, after much publicity and a great deal of argument and debate,

Oscar Canfield (center), one the first Kootenai County Commissioners, is introduced by Bill McCrea at the cornerstone laying ceremony for the courthouse on Government Way, 1926.

THE RATHDRUM COURTHOUSE

INTERIOR OF THE VAULT
Strong Stone and Cement Structure
with Steel Fixtures

AGAINST REMOVAL

Plain Facts submitted by the Rathdrum County Seat Committee for the careful consideration of the voters of Kootenai County, Idaho

These photos were part of a series of photos taken in 1908 and used in the booklet "Against Removal".

"Those favoring the removal of the County seat from its present location, at Rathdrum, have made the County buildings the issue, and we propose to meet the issue with the plain facts.

The court house is a frame building containing twenty-two rooms, the main part of the building being practically new . . . "

ASSESSOR'S OFFICE
Length 23 ft., 6 in.; width 17 ft., 3 in.

SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE
Length 17 ft., 3 in., width 17 ft.

TREASURER'S OFFICE
Main office length 18 ft., width 22 ft.
Extension length 11 ft, 5 in., width 10 ft.

THE AUDITOR'S OFFICE
Length 49 ft., 2 in., width 31 ft.

the court ruled that the Spaulding county division bill was unconstitutional. Kootenai County retained its original name and boundaries with Rathdrum still the county seat.

Kootenai Finally Divided

Even though the Spaulding division bill was ruled unconstitutional, the debates did make one thing very clear. Kootenai was a very large county and would eventually have to be divided. The main argument in favor of the division was that the county formation caused extravagant expenditures in court cases because of distances to be traveled, plus the cost of room and board during long cases. The county division issue was not over.

Coeur d'Alene City Hall, built in 1908, housed Kootenai County offices from 1908 to 1926 when the County offices were moved to the courthouse on Government Way.

On January 12, 1907, an act to create and organize the county of Bonner from the northern part of Kootenai was drafted and introduced by Representative Taylor. The bill passed the house and senate without opposition and was signed into law on February 21, 1907 with Sandpoint as the county seat.

Coeur d'Alene Voted County Seat

Following the establishment of Bonner County, community leaders in the Coeur d'Alene area launched a very organized and aggressive campaign to make the city of Coeur d'Alene the county seat of Kootenai County. A County Seat Removal Committee was organized to canvas the community. Within a few months over 6,000 signatures had been acquired and turned over to the court. On September 1, 1908, Judge Wood ordered that the question be submitted to a vote of the people at the general election on November 3.

For the next two months the goal of the County Seat Removal Committee was to convince every legal voter in Coeur d'Alene to vote in favor of moving the county seat to Coeur d'Alene. There were rallies throughout the county and speeches at every kind of meeting. The Coeur d'Alene Press presented guest editorials in almost every issue and sponsored an essay writing contest for school children. The city of Coeur d'Alene agreed to provide the county with space for a courthouse in the new city hall which was under construction.

When the votes were counted on November 3, 1908, Coeur d'Alene had achieved an over-whelming victory. Citizens of the city were celebrating most of the night with parties and dancing in the streets. On November 13 various county officials started selecting offices in

the new city hall. The city of Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai County shared the city hall building until 1926 when a new courthouse was constructed.

Kootenai County Takes Present Shape

Seven years after Coeur d'Alene became the county seat the county division issue came up again. The towns and communities in the lower part of Kootenai County wanted to organize their own county. Again, the court cost for travel was the principle argument for the division.

Representative Hull from St. Maries championed the division bill creating the county of Benewah from the southern part of Kootenai County. The bill passed without opposition and was signed by Governor Alexander on January 23, 1915 with St. Maries as the county seat.

From its creation in 1864, in a vast unorganized and sparsely populated part of a new territory, and having been expanded, divided, reduced and even abolished, Kootenai County reached its present geographical shape after the creation of Benewah County in 1915.

Museum Helps With County Sesquicentennial

For the past month Robert has been working with County Commissioner Jai Nelson and her staff to create a display in the lobby of the Courthouse to celebrate Kootenai County's Sesquicentennial. The exhibit will consist of four 24 x 36 panels representing the various stages of geographical development of the county from 1864 to 1915. A display case will be built to shows several artifacts that relate to the county's history. The framed panels and display case will be given to the Museum when the Sesquicentennial celebration is over.

From the Board President

Once again, we are approaching our annual meeting and the time we reflect on the previous year's accomplishments and the new challenges that lay before us. I had a chance to sit down with Dorothy Dahlgren just last week to review our upcoming Board meeting agenda and to inform her I was planning to step down at the end of my term in April. I explained to Dorothy that my growing children (Dan is 8, Clare is 11) are entering a stage of eternal shuttling to events and activities. The increased travel demands of a new job just don't allow me to put the time and energy necessary to effectively perform the responsibilities of a Board member's position, let alone the President's role.

I was feeling that I had not accomplished much during my four year tenure. But as Dorothy and I reflected and looked over our planning documents there were many accomplishments in the last 4 years:

- Kept sight of our mission in all of our decision making.

- Expanded our community awareness through increased programs and marketing.

- Collaborated with NIC, Coeur d'Alene Public Library and others to bring local history to the public.

- Worked with nonprofits and the City to secure property for the Museum at the Four Corners.

- Preserved significant artifacts, photos and archival materials.

- Increased membership and received several cash donations.

I leave feeling we have made good progress in achieving many of our goals. I will continue to work with, and support, the Museum.

Mike Dolan, Board President

The Endowment and Planned Giving

The MNI Board has approved an investment policy. It reflects the desire to respect donors, work for a better return, and still keep the museum's assets safe. To date, funds have been placed in low risk certificate of deposits and a money market account.

At the January Board meeting, Bob Hoover explained the Idaho Community Foundation's program for managing our endowment. The Board will continue to research other options as well. We need to build the endowment which is about $93,000. This is where you come in. In your tax and estate planning please consider a donation to the endowment.

Why You Should Support the Museum

North Idaho is rapidly growing and with those changes we face a loss of community identity. Understanding that this place is not interchangeable with countless other places helps identify us personally and as a community. Through remembering and recording our history we construct a meaning and an identity for ourselves, and our communities.

The Museum provides the public with the resources to understand and appreciate the area's rich cultural heritage. Understanding the past enhances community pride and enriches our lives.

A donation to the Museum of North Idaho's endowment fund is an investment in the future of our community. The interest provides operating funds that will ensure the future preservation of our heritage.

The Museum is a nonprofit organization and donations are tax deductible. Please consult with your attorney or accountant for information about how you can help the Museum. Continue the legacy by including the Museum in your giving and estate planning.

Help Raise Membership

Building the Museum membership and support base is vital to the future of the Museum. We are asking members to take an active role in helping the Museum increase its visibility in the community by soliciting new members.

Our membership drives over the last two years have increased dues income from $17,755 to $22,534 thanks to the Museum Membership Team who helped recruit new members and bring back former members.

Considering the growth of the community and the growth in programs and services provided by the Museum, we think a 1,000 members goal is realistic. We have 734 members but 250 of them are lapsed. The role of the committee will be to call on lasped members, to provide a list of potential members and actively solicit individuals through the month of March. Call Robert Singletary 755-1308 to sign up for the committee.

Serve on the Museum Board

The Museum of North Idaho's nominating committee is seeking applicants to fill three-year terms on its nine-member nonprofit Board. As the Museum works towards a new facility the Board's role in connecting with community leaders and potential donors is essential.

Please contact Board member Larry Strobel at 664-4904, email dd@museumni.org or visit www.museumni.org for more information. Interviews will take place in early March. Board members are elected by the membership in April.

Coeur d'Alene in the 20th Century - **Fourth Thursday of the Month, 7 pm Coeur d'Alene Library**

Robert Singletary will present a 12-part lecture series "Coeur d'Alene in the 20th Century" beginning Thursday January 23 at 7:00 PM in the Coeur d'Alene Pubic Library's community room. The Museum of North Idaho and the Coeur d'Alene Pubic Library are sponsoring the series that traces the history of Coeur d'Alene decade-by-decade starting with 1900 and ending with 2000. The programs will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month.

Robert will discuss how industry, business, education, politics, arts and culture, individuals and organizations have contributed to the development of Coeur d'Alene showing how and why the city developed and grew to its present state.

To aid in Robert's research and to preserve Coeur d'Alene's history the Museum is asking for photographs and artifacts from the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Call the Museum at 664-3448, Robert 755-1308 or email dd@museumni.org if you have items or information that you would like to donate.

Artifact Donations Since November

Jo Simpson: North Idaho poster.

Shelly Bruna: Teacher Madie Bull's class photos. If you were a student in Miss Bull's class at Harding and and can identify your classmates we would like to hear from you.

Myles Durkin: Hydroplane photos from 1965.

Ray Johnson: Red Collar Line monthly abstract blank forms.

Sue Gottler: Abstract of Lot 10 Block 6 of O'Brien's 1st Addition, Cd'A.

Dennis Eichhorn: Universal Life Church Picnic 1971 posters, bulletins, press release and flyer.

Memorials

- For Leeman "Jack" Spurgeon from TOPS 30 (Nancy Brockus), Wade Davis, Teresa Hand, Daniel Bonk, Ramona Spurgeon, Cynthia Spurgeon, Anmarie Gillings, Wayne Godare on behalf of Chapter 13 Trustee's office in Portland, Oregon, Sally & Bob MacKenzie

- For Bob Ross from Bernie & Pat Barber

- For Ken, Marvin and Violet Jones from Ron and Ardelle Holmquist

- For Stevan Joseph from Peter Anderson and Mike Shibley

All memorial donations go into the Endowment Fund. The endowment is important to the financial health of the Museum and your help in building the endowment will ensure the Museum's future.

To make a memorial donation use the form on the back of the newsletter.

The Fitzpatrick Family (Ronnie) in memory of David Schleigh and Ria Novac: Universal Life Church Picnic 1971 poster.

Margaret Post Fickeisen: Poster of John T. Wood for Mayor, Political poster and cards for Ella Wilcox, political papers from c. 1950.

Stephan Tracey: DVD of June 1948 logging operation on the St. Maries River and the millpond of the St. Maries Lumber Co. taken by Jack Howard Tracy, who worked for the company.

Jim & Mary Ann Landers: 1920s era wooden surfboard and snow skiis used by "Tiny" Norma Jackson.

C-Span Features Museum

Last fall C-SPAN reporters came to Coeur d'Alene to explore our history and literary culture. The coordinating producer called the Museum and asked for our assistance. Robert took on the job of working with the team while filming in Coeur d'Alene. They visited several historic sites and interviewed numerous people including Sandi Bloem, Mayor of Coeur d'Alene; Ray Cropp, owner of the Crystal Gold Mine; Quanah Matheson, Cultural Director of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe; Mark Weadick, fur trade historian; Mike Bullard, author; Tony Stewart, Human Rights Task Force, and Robert, who talked about Fort Sherman and the history of logging in Coeur d'Alene. After airing in December the video segments are now available at http://www.c-span.org/LocalContent/CoeurdAlene/

Cash Donations

Kim & Liz Cooper
Dan Gookin
Rick Norton
Wayne & Faye Sweney
Jane Feerer
Ray & Eleanor Grannis
Sons of Norway
Kay Powers
Panhandle Concrete, Mike Moen
Sheryl Brandon (endowment)

Museum Reopens April 1

Our 2014 feature exhibit *Power to the Farm: Rural Electrification in North Idaho* is brought to us by a grant from the Idaho Humanities Council.

Savina Darzes is working with volunteers on the research and design of the exhibit that will explore how electricity came to North Idaho's rural areas beginning in 1939 and the impact it had on people's everyday lives. If you would like to help contact the Museum.

Kootenai Electric Coop's Melissa Newcomer will speak at the Museum's annual meeting and banquet Tuesday April 15. Details will be mailed out in March.

The exhibit opens April 1, hours 11-5 Tues. through Sat.

Kootenai Electric Assoc. fair booth.

MUSEUM of NORTH IDAHO

PO Box 812
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83816-0812

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Get on Board!

Send in a Membership		Make An Additional Donation To A Special Fund
☐ *Community Sponsor*	**$1,000**	
☐ *Friend of History*	**$500**	Memorial/Endowment $_____
☐ *Georgie Oakes*	**$100+**	Building Fund $_____
☐ *Idaho*	**$100**	Chapel $_____
☐ *Flyer*	**$50**	**Total enclosed $_____**
☐ *Amelia Wheaton*	**$25**	

Your membership expiration date is on the mailing label.

Name_____

Address_____

City _____ State/Zip_____

Secondary Addr. _____

_____Phone _____

email _____

Memorial Donation For: _____

Amount _____ Whom to notify_____

_____

Send your tax deductible contribution to:
Museum of North Idaho * PO Box 812 * Cd'A, ID 83816-0812

Museum of North Idaho Mission Statement

The Museum of North Idaho collects, preserves and interprets the history of the Coeur d'Alene Region to foster appreciation of the area's heritage.

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