

# Twin Falls County Historical Society Museum

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The Official Newsletter of the Twin Falls County Historical Society Museum

# December 2024



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## Buhl's First Christmas

This story comes from the book *Buhl, Idaho A Century of Stories* by James H. Barker with information from *The Twin Falls Weekly News* in 1906, *The Buhl Herald* in 1956, and *Desert Brown to Valley Green* and *Magic Valley Pioneers* by Edna Pember Riedesel and Gerhard A. Riedesel.

“That very first Christmas in 1906 was a thing to remember. In the raw Idaho settlement called Buhl, the newly organized Union Sunday School invited each and all to come to a party. This was to be the first social event in the new schoolhouse, which was being built on Main Street right beside the Hotel Buhl. The school building was so new that the carpenters were still working on it the afternoon of Christmas Eve, as women bustled back and forth preparing for the evening.

Initially, when it didn't appear that the schoolhouse would be ready in time, the amusement club had made preparations for a Christmas ball to take place in the Carey billiard hall since it had such a splendid dance floor. But a large force of men began working on the new schoolhouse to rush it to completion for the party on Christmas Eve. Late in the afternoon on December 24<sup>th</sup>, the new schoolhouse was finally finished. The seats were even in place and ready for school after the holidays were over.

Butcher T.W. Snodgrass had arranged for a Christmas tree. From his meat market in Buhl, he sent two men to his father-in-law's place, the Hopkins Ranch near Clear Lakes, to find a fine juniper tree. The roads weren't much more than trails through sagebrush, and there wasn't yet a ferry or bridge across the Snake River. So, once they'd cut the tree, the two men had to find a way to bring it to Buhl across the ice on the Snake River. It took the men two days to get it from Clear Lakes into town, but when the men arrived, they'd brought back a trophy—a fine juniper tree, worthy in size and shape.

On that first Christmas, Buhl was able to boast that while the citizens of Twin Falls had to be satisfied with sagebrush, Buhl had a real tree.

The tree was found to be too tall for the school building, so a carpenter was assigned to cut chips from the base of the tree. Herman Geer, the Irish painter, marked each of the chips with the date and name of the town and then oiled each chip to preserve the chip and the writing. Each participant in the Christmas program was to be given one of the chips.

The tree was brought in, set up and trimmed. Never did a tree look prettier or bear such rich fruit as that juniper, which made the young people happy. A light snow fell during the day, and evening found the ground white spotted only with dark clumps of sagebrush. The roads surrounding Buhl at best were only wheel trails, and many a settler had no road at all; he just turned the head of his horse in the direction he wanted to go and headed cross country through the sagebrush. By nightfall everybody for miles around was on his way. There were no kerosene lights glowing in any shacks that night—nobody was at home. The town itself could scarcely accommodate all the horse teams, for Buhl was only just getting itself together. After a few hitching posts in town were filled, many teams had to be tied to sagebrush.

The program was enthusiastically received with Union Sunday School superintendent Harvey Hobson welcoming one and all. Recitations were given by Percy Heath, Alpha Shewmake, Vida Hobson, Esther Howard and Floyd Berry.

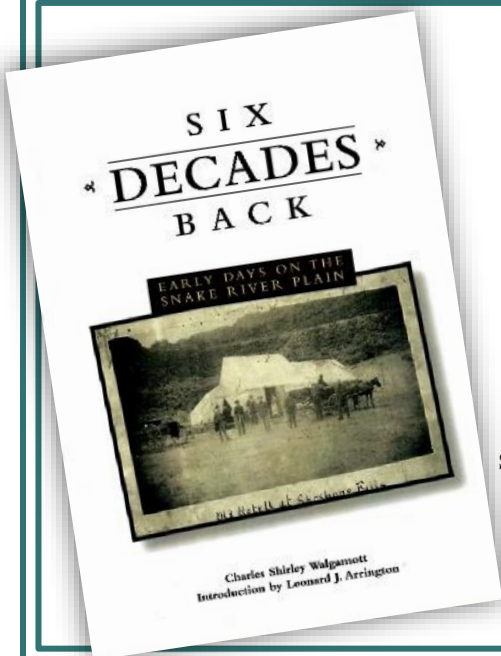
More recitations followed by Kelly Heath, Amanda Lindstrom, Ruth Sandness, Cora Schooler and Ruth Berry. Vocal solos were sung by Lillie Lindstrom, Irene Ford and Mrs. George Eveleth. Instrumental solos were played by Edith Milner and Frank Wise on the violin. But the real fun began when “Santa Claus” arrived to distribute gifts.

It was a white Christmas, and E.A. Milner, playing the part of Santa, arrived in a cutter jingling with sleigh bells which had been brought to Buhl all the way from Colorado by John Hinckley and his sister, Mary.

Everyone received a gift and a treat since Bihl merchants had donated candy and nuts. There must have been 156 people present because everyone received an orange, and just exactly thirteen dozen oranges were enough to go around with everyone present getting one orange. The big juniper was loaded down with all kinds of nice presents that Santa Claus had brought to the children, and he remembered many old people too, knowing that they never get too old to be children on Christmas Eve.

Pioneer E.H. Pember was there, and he remembered, “What a huge family, but what a joyful one. Family indeed—for the vicissitudes of pioneering, common interests of developing new land and the desire of companionship all made bonds of friendship closely akin to family ties.”

The Rev. Hugh Garner later wrote: “What a Christmas that was! Most of those 156 people at the program had until recently lived in established homes and communities far removed from this small southern Idaho desert outpost. They no doubt had been thinking of kinfolk and friends from whom they’d recently been separated. This gala party was shaped by familiar customs and memories of Christmases past. And it would be possible to put into words how much it meant to them.”



## New Book at the Museum!

Charles Shirley Walgamott arrived by stage at Rock Creek Station, Idaho Territory, on August 8, 1875. In an untamed land, far from his native Iowa, he survived illness, hardship, and lawlessness with his humor intact. Never a stranger to work, Walgamott mined, trapped, ranched, and hunted. While living with settlers, Indians, and outlaws alike, he amassed a trove of unforgettable experiences.

These stories were published in the mid-1920s and later collected into a one-volume book, *Six Decades Back*, in 1936. This new reprint was suggested by the Twin Falls 2004 Centennial Committee in celebration of pioneer Charles Walgamott and his contribution of the earliest written accounts of the region. Several of the photos that appeared in the original editions are included to capture the authentic flavor of this classic of Idaho history.

# Item Highlight

## Lillie's Ice Skates



Lillie Herrett  
1906-1994



According to a note attached to the skates, Lillie Herrett enjoyed skating and would often take her daughter, Marion to skate at the Mary Alice Park located near Pillar Falls



Lillie and Norman working on a piece of jewelry.  
-Twin Falls Times News March 5, 1943

This worn and well-loved pair of Winslow ice skates was given to Lillie Schroyer as a young teen.

Lillie was born and raised in South Dakota. In 1932, she married a young teacher named Norman Herrett. The couple followed Norman's teaching career from South Dakota to Wyoming and Montana before finding their place in Idaho history in 1945 when Norman was hired to teach at Twin Falls High School.

While living in Twin Falls, Norman and Lillie took up the hobby of jewelry making. Together, they worked out the jewelry manufacturing processes, from casting and trimming the metals to cutting and polishing the stones.

Lillie did much of the processing, working on jewelry while her husband and daughter, Marion, were at school.

The Herrett's jewelry business flourished in Twin Falls, opening a shop on Kimberly Road in 1946. Part of this building would later become the Herrett's Arts and Science Center where children could learn about different cultures and history using hands-on techniques.

In 1972, Norman and Lillie offered to donate their collection of Native American artifacts to the College of Southern Idaho. CSI agreed and built a campus facility to house the collection and continue to offer educational programs.

The Herrett Museum was officially dedicated on June 13, 1980, named after Lillie and Norman Herrett.



# Christmas Party!

## December 14<sup>th</sup> 6:00



The Historical Society's Christmas Potluck Dinner will be Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> 6:00 at the Museum. Don your best Christmas sweaters and join us for a festive evening of good food and good company!

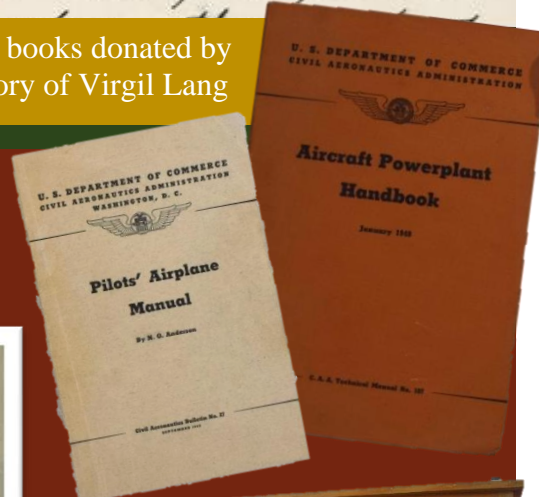
*C. E. B. at "Camp Drinking Place" in lovely Hagerman Valley* *C. E. B. at "Camp Drinking-Place" in lovely Hagerman Valley*

## Donations

WWII clothing and books donated by Rick Lang in memory of Virgil Lang



Toy pistols donated by Karen Randolph in memory of Robert Alldaffer



1960's football cleats donated by Leon Reed. Worn when he played Football at Hansen High School.



Formal Dresses donated by L.J. Smith

Large 1900s school bookcase donated by Jack Seagraves in memory of Judy Seagraves



YMCA Scrapbooks donated by United Way



*A Big Thank You*  
to everyone who donated in memory of Dick Tucker!