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### **The Hailey Rodeo Park Interpretive Exhibit Received a \$4,000 grant**

HAILEY – The Hailey Rodeo Park Interpretive Exhibit has received a \$4,000 grant from the Idaho Humanities Council for *Rodeo: A Story of Community*. For more than a century, the rodeo grounds site has functioned as a community gathering place. Ultimately, the goal of the reconstructed Hailey Rodeo Park is not only to provide an ongoing, reinvigorated gathering place for residents and tourists alike, but also to provide a gathering place for stories that connect the present with the past and promote a meaningful sense of community identity.

As the first step towards creating the interpretive exhibit, Florence Blanchard, the project historian, recently completed a research project on the rodeo and rodeo grounds site. The rodeo has been a long standing tradition at this historic site, and it has been a defining force in the community of Hailey since 1949. What is less known and understood is that this site was a community gathering place for many years prior to the advent of the rodeo. In 1903, the land presently occupied by the rodeo grounds and adjacent school sports fields was deeded to the City of Hailey. Civic leaders used the deeded property for a park (called Werthheimer Park), race track, and ball field over the next decades. With Blanchard's recently completed research, little known community uses of this site have been documented and can be included in the new exhibit. "Not many people know that the site was once a fairgrounds or that the first airplanes to land in Blaine County landed there. This is a site that has been reinvented over and over to meet the needs of the community," said Blanchard.

The research report identifies a plethora of historic photographs, some film footage and a fair number of artifacts. For example, Ralph Harris has donated numerous photographs to the project, including a panoramic photograph of the original 1947 Sawtooth Rangers Riding Club. Harris' father, Charles, was a jockey at the Hailey race track and an original member of the Sawtooth Rangers. Wanda Cole McKinney has donated a pair of beaded deerskin gloves that she wore in the 1950 rodeo, where she was named Rodeo Queen; a photo of McKinney wearing the gloves was also donated. Home movies from the 1950s and 1960s showing rodeo events and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade have been donated by Larry Burke; the movies were taken by Burke's father, former publisher of the Hailey Times. Other artifacts have



been generously offered, but have not yet been formally accessioned. “We are extremely grateful for the generosity of all donors to this project,” noted City Administrator Heather Dawson. “Many people we have spoken with have offered artifacts, memorabilia and stories that will, quite simply, be perfect for this exhibit.”

In addition, four subjects have been identified for oral histories, including Harris, Ted Uhrig, Harold Drussel and Del Nicholson. The interviews are being conducted by the Community Library Association Regional History Department under the direction of Sandra Hofferber. “It is difficult for most people to sit down and write-out their memories. Oral histories are a relatively easy way for us to collect recollections of people from all walks of life,” Hofferber said. “These stories might not otherwise be told. Preserving their stories gives us a more balanced, well-rounded idea of what our historical roots are. Not only are we preserving the stories of our times, but the voices and the way language is used.” The final exhibit will likely include an audio component that makes use of these interviews.

There are also many photos in the Mallory Collection at the Hailey Public Library and in the Regional History Department collection at the Community Library in Ketchum that may be used in the exhibit. For example, the Mallory Collection includes baseball photographs at the site, and Blanchard’s research reports lists nearly four dozen rodeo action, rodeo women and 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade photographs in the Regional History Department collection.

Blanchard’s research report also contains old news articles and copies of rodeo programs and advertisements. The final exhibit may include elements of these types of memorabilia, too, and the project continues to seek original copies of any print materials that can be found.

The next step is to secure the services of an exhibit design firm to complete a conceptual design of the exhibit. The selected firm will use Blanchard’s research report and work collaboratively with the project team to achieve the conceptual design. The project team is comprised of Rob Lonning, Joan Davies and Rachel Wolfe, all members of the Hailey Historic Preservation Commission; Lorna Hazelton, Sawtooth Rangers; Evelyn Phillips to assist with exhibit illustrations; Kristin Poole of the Sun Valley Center for the Arts; Jenny Emery Davidson, project scholar; Blanchard, Hofferber and city staff. The conceptual design will be the basis of the ultimate form of the exhibit, and will provide a framework for further grant seeking and fundraising to augment the existing exhibit budget. It will also provide a tangible means of sharing the project plan with the community and helping spread the word about what artifacts or memorabilia may still be needed to complete the exhibit.

The project continues to seek donations of artifacts, photographs, film footage, original printed matter (fliers, programs, advertisements) and stories related to the history of the rodeo or the history of the site. The project also welcomes monetary assistance. The following items are of specific interest:

- 1954 copy of Argosy Magazine, which documented the appearance of Slim Pickens in the 1953 Hailey rodeo, where he dazzled the crowd with his bullfighting and comedy routines
- Chaps, reins, boots, i.e., a complete rodeo cowboy outfit
- Sawtooth Rangers Riding Club uniform
- Additional rodeo queen trophies, outfits, hats, boots, etc.

Anyone with items that may be of interest for inclusion in the exhibit can contact Tracy Anderson at Hailey City Hall.