



**Reconnaissance-level Survey
Hailey, Idaho
Main Street, Myrtle to Chestnut Streets
Plus 4 Misc. Properties**

Prepared for
City of Hailey Historic Preservation Commission

By

TAG Historical Research & Consulting

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Research Design

The City of Hailey requested a reconnaissance-level survey of all buildings on Main Street between Myrtle Street on the north and Chestnut Street on the south plus four other properties, including

The Rodeo Grounds, south end of Main Street
Upper Big Wood River Grange Hall, 609 3rd Ave. South
Barn on Fox Acres Road near the Blaine County Aquatic Center
A Touch of Class Beauty Salon, 316 N. River Street

The goal of the survey was to determine which properties are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. A portion of Main Street was previously recorded in 1982 (Survey 134); the current project provides updated information for the buildings recorded in 1982.

Methodology

The reconnaissance-level survey was conducted in accordance with the standards of the *Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory Manual* and *The Idaho Historic Sites Inventory Automated Database: Manual of Instruction for Data Entry*.

Pre-field work was done at the Idaho State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Idaho State Historical Society Public Archives and Research Library (PARL). Additional research was conducted at the Regional History Department, Ketchum Community Library, Hailey Public Library and PARL.

A pedestrian survey of Main Street and the additional sites was conducted to complete the Idaho Historic Sites inventory form and to take the required photographs.

Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places possess historic significance and integrity. Significance may be found in four aspects of American history recognized by the National Register Criteria:

- Association with historic events or activities,
- Association with important persons,
- Distinctive design or physical characteristics, or
- Potential to provide important information about prehistory or history.

A property must meet at least one of the criteria for listing. Integrity must also be evident through historic qualities including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Generally properties must be fifty years of age or more to be considered historic places. They must also be significant when evaluated in relationship to major trends of history in their community, state or the nation.¹

Brief History of Hailey

Prospectors and miners were busy in the Wood River area as early as 1864, but conflicts with native residents, transportation problems and lack of mining technology slowed development of mines in the area until the late 1870s. Once the Utah and Northern railroad tracks had reached Blackfoot, the serious transportation issues were partially resolved and miners began pouring into the district. Settlements at Bellevue, Galena, Broadford and Ketchum were established by the summer of 1880. Successful entrepreneur John Hailey purchased land between Bellevue and Ketchum in December of 1880 and established a new town, Hailey, before the year ended. In 1881, political ambition drew Hailey from the Wood River area to Boise and he sold his land to the Idaho-Oregon Land Improvement Company. The new owners included railroad promoter Robert Strahorn who used his considerable skills and connections to boost Hailey. In the spring of 1881 as the population center of Logan County shifted from the South Fork of the Boise River to the Wood River district, an election was held to move the county seat from Rocky Bar to one of the new Wood River communities. Both Hailey and Bellevue fought hard for the designation with Hailey winning by a very slim (and to some suspect) 20-vote majority. Fourteen years later when old Alturas and Logan counties were dissolved, Hailey held on to the county seat in the newly created Blaine County.

Hailey prospered in the 1880s. In 1883 the Oregon Short Line arrived. Soon the town had the first telephone and electric light service in the territory—the telephone came in 1883, the lights in 1889. Disastrous fires struck the downtown business area in 1883 and again in 1889, but the town rebuilt to enjoy a few more years of prosperity. The Wood River mines faltered and generally failed by the time of the nationwide Panic of 1893. Although some mines operated in fits and starts afterward, the days of the boom were over and Hailey, along with other Wood River communities, had to find other ways to maintain its population. Livestock, particularly sheep, became an important part of the economic base. The Forest Service began to administer grazing and timber harvest on forest service lands and in the mid-1930s the agency built a large administrative site in Hailey. The activities of the county government helped Hailey retain its role as a central community. As smaller towns diminished in size and services, Hailey's role as a supply center grew stronger.

The scenic beauty of the Wood River Valley attracted many visitors even in the 19th century. The development of better roads in the 1920s and 1930s increased tourist traffic. Although the creation of Sun Valley resort in 1936 had a more direct impact on Ketchum, Hailey felt the increase in numbers of visitors and potential residents—both those who came to enjoy the benefits of leisure activities and the workforce required to support them. When tourism combined with the startup of a mining operation, as happened in Hailey when the Triumph mine reopened in the 1930s, the result was a small

boom in population. By the late 1940s, Hailey felt the pressure of growth enough to discuss to need to assign street numbers to houses and post street signs to clearly mark streets, not for the convenience of letter carriers, but for the safety of the townspeople. The Hailey Chamber of Commerce urgently discussed the issue in March, 1946, "It has become quite necessary that houses be numbered and streets named in the locating of fires, since the influx of so many new families makes it an impossibility to locate a fire by giving a persons name."²

The location of Hailey's commercial district on Main Street has remained fairly stable since the 1880s when the town was platted, with the heaviest concentration of commercial buildings on the blocks from Croy Street on the south to Silver Street on the north. The earliest available Sanborn Fire insurance maps shows this pattern of development and it continued through the latest available map, an updated version of the 1920 map issued in 1931. The earliest buildings were of generally of wood construction with a few exceptions, but after the devastation of two large fires in the 1880s, most buildings were constructed of brick.

The blocks of Main Street beyond Croy Street to Chestnut and from Silver Street to Myrtle tended to have mixed residential and business use or remained undeveloped, at least until 1931 when the most recent Sanborn map was published. Houses built along the street in these areas tended to be more modest. Most residents appear to have been middle class merchants or working class folks. T. E. Picotte, publisher of the *Wood River Times*, lived for a time at what is now 303 N. Main. According to an article published in 1931, Picotte remodeled a liquor warehouse building to be his home.³

The late 1930s saw a short spurt of commercial and other construction in Hailey. Between 1934 and 1939 the Rialto Hotel, the Harris Block and the Liberty Theater were built, along with several corner service stations, all of which have been remodeled for other uses or are non-extant. So many service stations were located on Main Street in June 1936 that the *Hailey Times* quipped, "Just think of a city the size of Hailey trying to get along with nine filling stations and all of them on Main Street. It's mighty fortunate that Ketchum and Bellevue are so close."⁴

The Sawtooth National Forest built a large Administrative complex on South Main between Pine and Elm Streets beginning in 1933 with the last building constructed in 1939. The forest supervisor's office was at this location until 1953 when administrative consolidation moved the office to Twin Falls. The complex remained in use by the Forest Service as a district ranger station then as a work station until 1992 when it was sold.⁵

Ketchum's growth in the 1970s brought Hailey to the attention of California developer Robert P. McCulloch, Jr. McCulloch purchased 650 acres of the Fox property south of town and planned to build housing to accommodate more than 6,000 people. (At the time Hailey's population was under 2,000). High interest rates and an uncertain economy stopped that first development attempt when only a few homes had been built, but in 1978 a local firm took over Woodside, changed the plan to focus on a lower density

development and succeeded. Hailey has since felt the effects of the rapid growth now endemic to Idaho and faces the many challenges of planning for rapid growth as it occurs. The commercial district now extends further on Main Street in both directions, with many houses converted to commercial use or replaced with new buildings.⁶

Survey Results

The Main Street section of the survey area is located within the boundaries of Hailey Townsite, as were three of the four additional properties. The fourth additional property, the Fox Barn, is located at the edge of the Woodside Subdivision. Construction dates were determined using Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, newspaper research, and other sources a survey of selected buildings in the downtown business district conducted in 1981-1982 by Jennifer Attebery and Ann Swanson of the State Historic Preservation Office. In the current survey no buildings on cross streets were recorded with the exception of a small house located at 9 E. Elm St. (HAI 50) which was originally associated with 418 S. Main St. (HAI 46).

Three properties in the survey area had been previously listed in the National Register:

HAI 21	W. W. Watt Building, 120 N. Main Street	Listed 1982
HAI 65	Wertheimer Building, 101 S. Main Street	Listed 1982
HAI 70	J. C. Fox Building, 115 S. Main Street	Listed 1982

Eighty-seven properties were recorded in this survey, of which seven were determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The eligible properties are:

HAI 01	The Fox Barn
HAI 02	The Hailey Rodeo Grounds
HAI 27	Obenchain Insurance, 102 N. Main St. (associated with the Harris Building)
HAI 28	Harris Building, 100 N. Main St.
HAI 38	Harris Apartments, 302-310 S. Main St.
HAI 69	J.J. Tracy Building, 111 S. Main St.
HAI 72	Rialto Hotel, 201 S. Main St.

Field No. HAI 01, the Fox Barn, was built c. 1935. Dr. Earl W. Fox, son of merchant J. C. Fox, was a physician and rancher. In about 1935 he moved his family from their home in Hailey to his ranch property, which is now the location of Woodside Subdivision. The barn is the only remaining building associated with the Fox ranch. It was donated to the Blaine County Recreation District by Springer Grubb Land Development Company after they acquired the property.⁷

Field No. HAI 02, the Hailey Rodeo grounds, were built in 1948 through the efforts of the Sawtooth Rangers Riding Club which had organized in 1947. Every Sunday throughout the summer, members of the club met at the site to build a rodeo arena and

stands. They “borrowed” the grandstand from the baseball field on the north side of the grounds. The first rodeo was held in October 1948. Since then, with occasional gaps, the rodeo grounds have been repaired and maintained annually by the Sawtooth Rangers Riding Club.⁸

Field No. HAI 27, Obenchain Insurance, is a one-story brick commercial building associated with Field No. 28, the Harris Building. Both buildings were badly damaged in a fire in July 1935. Before the fire, the small building was used as a storage building by Conoco. Lena Harris, owner of Harris Furniture, rebuilt both buildings after the fire.

Field No. HAI 28, Harris Building, a two-story brick commercial building with a three-bay façade featuring decorative brickwork. Harris Furniture, established by Charles E. Harris in 1891, moved to this corner in 1893. The original building burned in July 1935 (along with HAI 27) and was rebuilt later that year by Hailey builder Jack Rutter. According to the *Hailey Times*, “The front of the main building and annex has modern plate glass windows giving the corner a metropolitan appearance....When fully completed, this will be the best business block in this section of Idaho.” The paper also noted that the second story of the building would include six “family” apartments on the south side, while the north side would be used for storage.⁹

Field No. HAI 38, Harris Apartments, a one-story five unit apartment building, constructed of concrete block features rounded awnings over each entry door. The apartments were built c. 1946 for Charles and Pilar Harris. The mason was identified as Leonard Cornelius, but that information has not been verified. Newspaper accounts published in the late 1930s indicate a housing shortage in Hailey. In 1935 Lena Harris helped meet the demand with apartments in the Harris Building, but it wasn’t enough. World War II intervened, slowing residential construction everywhere, but the need to house returning GIs caused an upswing in construction when the war ended. The apartments were built on the former site of Kent Court, a popular tennis court in the 1930s.¹⁰

Field No. HAI 69, J. J. Tracy Building, a one-and-one half story brick commercial building with recessed entry. John J. Tracy and W. T. Riley arrived in the Wood River area in late 1880, just in time to set up a drug store in Bellevue when the mining rush began in earnest. After a short time they re-located to Hailey setting up shop in a tent-roofed building on Main and Bullion streets. The business was successful, but after a few years Riley left while Tracy continued the business, erecting this building c. 1906. John J. Tracy died in 1932. His sister Mrs. M. Blume and niece Susan Tracy, ran the drug store for several more years. By 1940 the store was sold to Otto Broyles whose family operated a pharmacy in the building until the 1980s.¹¹

Field No. HAI 72, a two-story brick building with decorative brick detailing and a canted entrance on the northwest corner. The Rialto Hotel was built for Julio Astoriquias in 1934. Originally built as a boarding house and café, it remained in operation as the Rialto Hotel until 1980 when it was remodeled and reopened as The Hailey Hotel. Both Jack

Rutter and the Bonim Brothers have been identified as the builders of the hotel, further research is needed to verify the builder(s) identification.¹²

The purpose of this survey was limited to determining individual eligibility. The previous survey, conducted in 1981, had already determined that there were not enough unaltered buildings in the downtown commercial district to create a historic district. Although recent renovations and remodels have been done with sensitivity toward the historic nature of the commercial district, over time the integrity of many of the historic buildings has diminished. The Liberty Theater (IHSI #13-4403) and the R. L. Mitchell Building (IHSI #13-4416) have been tastefully remodeled, but have not retained their historic integrity. Both had been determined eligible in the 1981 survey. Several properties recorded in Survey 134 are longer extant. They include:

IHSI # 13-4412	112 S. Main Street	Wood River Journal
13-4413	114 S. Main Street	Mint Bar/Dusty's
13-4414	118 S. Main Street	McDonald Insurance
13-4417	124 S. Main Street	Radio Shack/Laundromat
13-4418	126 S. Main Street	Opportunity Shop/Aukema Drugstore

The site of the Wood River Journal was an empty lot at the time of the current survey; the other properties were replaced or absorbed by The Mint Bar and the E.G. Willis Building, both constructed in 1995-1996.

An inventory list for Survey 134 created from the forms on file at the State Historic Preservation Office is included at the end of this report.

Recommendations

1. We suggest that the Commission review the eligible properties and determine a priority for National Register nominations for properties determined eligible. For planning purposes the cost of preparing a National Register of Historic Places nomination for a single building will generally run between \$2,000 and \$3,500
2. During the course of our research, John M. "Jack" Rutter was identified as the builder of many houses and commercial buildings in Hailey. In this survey, he is associated with the Liberty Theater, the Harris Building and the Rialto. Our newspaper research indicates he also worked in other towns including Boise and Burley. A project to document the work of this prolific builder would enrich the interpretive pool of information in Hailey and acknowledge the importance of his work in the community.
3. As with most Idaho communities, the years of early settlement in Hailey have been well documented, but there is a huge gap in information about the community's history after 1920. Change on Main Street has occurred slowly, but the 1930s appear to have been a time of growth and development. A project documenting 20th century Hailey 1920-1970 would be timely. There are still many possible oral history interviews with

people who remember those times. Rupert House, Ted Uhrig, Joan Davies and Teddie Daley were all identified as knowledgeable about Hailey's history. .

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¹ *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, National Register Bulletin 16A (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), p. 1.

² "Hailey C of C Discusses Plans for New Park," *Hailey Times*, March 14, 1946, p. 8, c. 7.

³ Photograph and caption, *Hailey Times*, 50th Anniversary Edition, June 18, 1931, p. 14.

⁴ "Around Hailey," *Hailey Times*, June 6, 1936, p. 8.

⁵ "Hailey Administrative Site, Sawtooth National Forest," HABS No. ID-108, Photographs and Written Documentation, Historic American Building Survey, available online http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/, accessed June 2007.

⁶ "Wide Spot in Idaho Road May Boom: California Developer's Project Stirs Debate on Growth," by Daryl Lembke, *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 1973, part 1, p. 3; "Woodside: Huge Subdivision is Finally Coming to Life after Five Years," by Christopher Bogan, *Twin Falls Times News*, Oct. 16, 1978.

⁷ Personal communication from Joan Davies, 6/22/2007. Ms. Davies contacted Dr. Fox's daughter Geraldine Hastings, who remembers moving to the farm in the 1930s when she was a small child.

⁸ The club members began meeting in the summer of 1947 and filed incorporation papers the following year. Sawtooth Rangers, Inc., Articles of Incorporation filed 12/14/1948, on file with the Idaho Secretary of State, available online <http://www.idsos.state.id.us/corp>, accessed June 2007; "Riding Club Members Start Work on New Rodeo Arena," *Hailey Times*, 9/9/1948 p. 1, c. 6-7, articles published in the paper weekly through September follow building progress up until the first rodeo, held Oct. 3, 1948; telephone communication with Shelly Shoemaker, secretary, Sawtooth Rangers, June 2007.

⁹ Idaho Historic Site Survey Report 134, Field No. 10; "Harris Furniture Company Rebuilds on Broader Lines," *Hailey Times*, 10/3/1935, p. 1, c2; "New Harris Block in Hailey," *Hailey Times*, 12/26/1935, p. 1, c. 3-4 (with photo).

¹⁰ "Pilar Arriaga Harris" obituary, *Wood River Journal*, March 18, 2005, available online www.woodriverjournal.com, accessed June, 2007; personal communications from Joan Davies, 6/25 and

6/26/2007. Charles Harris still owns and lives in one of the apartments. Ms. Davies spoke with his son Ralph about the building. Exact construction date for the apartment could not be verified. Information regarding Kent Court was located in the *Hailey Times*, 1932-1937.

¹¹ Survey Report 134, Field No. 2; Hiram T. French, *History of Idaho* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1914), vol. III, p. 955; “Hailey Walking Tour,” *Wood River Journal Centennial Edition*, 1981, p. 64-65; “Local Firms That Have Helped Build Blaine County,” *Hailey Times*, 7/28/1938 pp. 10-11.

¹²Survey Report 134, Field No. 1, *Wood River Journal Centennial Edition*, p. 64-65; Hailey Historic Preservation Walking Tour, http://www.haileycityhall.org/historicPreservation/index_files, accessed June 2007. The Rialto appears in Hailey telephone directories for 1940, 1959, 1965, and 1976. Later directories list the Hailey Hotel.

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