



Founded in 1972, the Bonner County History Museum has been collecting and preserving the Bonner County region's significant stories for over 40 years.

The Museum is located in view of Lake Pend Oreille in beautiful Lakeview Park. The park has many amenities including picnic areas, a playground, tennis courts, and the Native Plant Society arboretum. Adjacent to Lakeview Park is Memorial Field which has a boat launch and is home to the Festival at Sandpoint every August.

The Bonner County History Museum is a private, non-profit educational organization (I.R.S. 501 (c) 3). The museum is a membership organization, open to all. We operate thanks to community support, membership fees, gifts, retail sales and donations, and grants from private foundations.

Bonner County History Museum
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Sandpoint, ID 83864
(208) 263-2344
bchs@frontier.com

Mission – History Creating Community

Activities that advance our Mission include:

- Facilitating the collection and preservation of artifacts, images, manuscripts, other printed materials relating to the history of Bonner County;
- Exhibiting and housing such materials in our Museum and at locations around the county which are available to the public
- Encouraging research of our local history
- Presenting educational and innovative programs that highlight our history, including lectures, meetings, and other events
- Creating opportunities for history to be interactive and engaging
- Partnering with local schools to create relationships that foster an ongoing interest in our shared history

History of the Museum

In 1953, the first Museum in this area was established in Room 2 of Sandpoint High School by Dr. Ethel Page Westwood. It was called the Museum of Natural and Human History and

displayed her extensive collection of rocks and fossils, along with artifacts that were contributed by local residents.

Within a year the Museum moved to the annex of the Sandpoint Community Hall, and later to the basement of the Sandpoint Library at Second and Poplar Streets. Without a permanent location, the collections suffered damage and there were limitations in how things could be displayed, so the long search for a permanent structure to house the Museum began. Fundraising efforts to build a museum started with the David Thompson Sesquicentennial Commemoration was in 1959, which put \$550 into the coffers.

On January 3, 1972, Articles of Incorporation were signed by:

Sallie Bishop, Teresa Deshon, Phyllis Holzemer, K.T. Littlefield, Herrick "Swede" Heitman, Leonard Anderson. And Richard Curtis

On March 9, 1972, The Sandpoint News-Bulletin announced the formation of a non-profit organization dedicated to the collecting and preservation of the historical heritage of Bonner County. Mrs. Littlefield was the Society's acting President at the time, and a temporary board of directors was named during the organizational period. The Society's long-range goal included a museum building where collections and research materials would be available to the public. The building project gained focus in the community during the celebration of the nation's bicentennial in 1976. \$50,000 was raised in cash and pledges in a few weeks and construction began on the site of the old Fairgrounds, now Lakeview Park. The grand opening was held in July of 1980.

Over the years, county residents have shown their generosity by contributing thousands of artifacts, photographs, and documents related to their family and community histories. After 30 years of collecting, the Trustees are now looking at opportunities to expand the Museum in order to continue preserving our county history and serving local residents and visitors with quality exhibits, research, and programming.

The Society is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees that are elected by the membership of the organization. The Museum is managed by an Executive Director, Curator and Museum Coordinator and assisted by a team of talented and dedicated volunteers. As the Museum is a repository of county records, Bonner County contributes funds each year to the Society's annual budget. The remainder of the Museum's operating expenses are raised through admission fees, gift shop sales, memberships, memorials, research fees, special fundraisers, and grants.

In 2001 the Society was honored to receive the Esto Perpetua Award "in honor and recognition of significant contributions to the preservation of Idaho history." The Society and Museum was once again honored in 2008 by receiving the first Sister Alfreda Elsensohn Award for excellence jointly presented by the Idaho State Historical Society, Idaho Humanities Council, and Idaho Heritage Trust.

Board of Trustees

Bonner County Historical Society Trustees have a fiduciary and policy-setting responsibility for the welfare of the Museum. The board is extraordinarily generous, supporting ongoing operations and special needs.

2019/20 Officers of the Board

Ruth Wimberly, President
Barbara Botsch, Vice President
Ann Dutson-Sater, Treasurer
Irv Jenkins, Secretary

2019/20 Directors

Bev Kee
Brent Featherston
Nancy Fontaine
Will Valentine
Royal Shields
Kathy Osborne
Gayl Downward
Julie Frank

Staff

Museum Director, Olivia Luther

Bonner County History Museum's Executive Director, Olivia Luther, joined the museum in August of 2012. Olivia came to the museum with a strong mix of both for-profit and non-profit management skills. Olivia received her BA in Art History, with a minor in Public Relations, from San Diego State University and a MPhil in Art History and Connoisseurship from the University of Glasgow, Scotland and Christies, London. She served as Chief Curator and Museum Director at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido from 2005-2011. She has curated over 60 exhibits, published 3 catalogues, and designed over 20 successful public and educational programs.

Since arriving at the Museum, Olivia has worked with the board, staff and a wonderful team of volunteers to update exhibits, re-imagine the space to maximize exhibits, and create a series of public programs that appeal to a wider audience. With a firm belief in the event driven museum, she worked with the board to re-brand the organization, including a revision of the mission statement to History Creating Community – reinforcing the belief that a community centered organization is better positioned to remain relevant and vibrant.

Museum Curator, Heather Upton

Our Museum Curator Heather Upton's love of history and design began as a young child. She was hooked when she found her first treasure at an Antique Shop at the age of five. A graduate from the University of Oregon, with a focus on visual arts, she studied prolific jewel design houses. She went on to earn her Bachelor of Arts in Art History. Her vocation expanded to include nearly a decade in inter and personal design. She later acquired her Gemology Degree through the Gemological Institute of America. She is currently an independent jewelry consultant, specializing assisting individuals with their jewelry wardrobes. She identifies, appraises and in many cases re-fashions pieces. Her hunt for antiques continues, as she finds fantastic treasures for resale; on display at Oak Street Mercantile, in Sandpoint. Heather states, "Curating for the museum is a delight. It's a true combination of my passions; Design and History." In addition to her curatorial duties, Heather looks forward to applying her skills from over decade of merchandising and buying experience within the specialty boutique re to the

museum's gift shop. Her goal is to transform the museum gift shop into an environment that would entice not only museum goers but individuals from the community to shop on a continual basis. She be expanding merchandise categories, offering quality items that are both unique and fun. In her role as curator, she wants to create thought provoking exhibitions and presentations that captivate the viewer, allowing our patrons to leave with their imaginations invigorated and their minds brimming with new information.

Museum Coordinator, Cassi Marler

Our Museum Coordinator is a three year resident of Sandpoint. Raised in Shoreline, WA, Cassi found it difficult from day one to fit into the busy city life. She was fortunate enough to have parents who supported her to be whoever she wanted, and encouraged spending as much time outdoors as possible. Teaching her about small town industries and instilling the importance of family and communities. Cassi spent a great portion of her childhood exploring the western U.S. and believes it was then that she realized her heart belonged in the country. She jumped at the first opportunity and moved to Pullman, WA to study Agriculture Technology and Ranch Management at Washington State University. When adopting two horses and a cow-dog named Dallas were thrown into the mix, she knew there was no going back. Before the museum, she had primarily worked in the agriculture and trucking business, living in a fifth wheel trailer off the grid in Troy, ID and Lenore, ID. The experience and adventure was thrilling, but she could not be more excited to have finally made it to Sandpoint, where she really feels at home.

Coming from a long line of rock hounds and artifact hunters, the museum has been a welcoming place where Cassi feels like she can connect with people of similar interests and mindsets. In her down time you can find Cassi hunting, fishing, riding her horses, or curled up with a good book. The communities' passion for preserving and creating history is truly inspiring to her, and she could not be more excited to be a part of it.