

# SNAKE RIVER HERITAGE CENTER

*Annual Newsletter | 2025–2026*  
Celebrating 100 Years of Hooker Hall | Weiser, Idaho

## President's Message

Dear Friends, Members, and Supporters of the Snake River Heritage Center,

What a year it has been! As I reflect on 2025, I am filled with enormous pride and deep gratitude for this community – for you, the people who breathe life into these historic walls of Hooker Hall. This year marked one of the most significant milestones in our organization's history: the 100th birthday of Hooker Hall, the remarkable poured-concrete building that has anchored the heart of Weiser since 1925.

A century ago, this building stood as a beacon of education and opportunity as the Intermountain Institute – a place where Reverend Edward Paddock, Jane Slocum, and Thomas Maryatt believed young people deserved an opportunity to advance their education and quality of life. The institute's goal was "An education and a trade for every boy and girl willing to work for them." The kids received an education academically and socially because of their willingness to work for it. That same spirit of purpose, community, and resilience echoes through every room of the Snake River Heritage Center today.

This centennial year would not have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of donors who helped us repair the ballroom floor joists, a critical project that restored one of our most beloved gathering spaces. Because of your investment, we were able to open the Grand Ballroom for celebrations worthy of 100 years.

We hosted an exciting series of 100th birthday celebrations throughout 2025, each event drawing visitors, neighbors, and history-lovers together under one roof. From the elegance of the May Day Tea Party to the rustic charm of the Dutch Oven Gathering, the mystery and drama of our Murder Mystery Dinner, and the spine-tingling Haunted History of Weiser, each event told a piece of this building's story in a uniquely memorable way.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are energized and ambitious. Our board is planning new events, developing our exhibit spaces, revitalizing our Gift Shop, and working to make the SRHC an even more vibrant resource for Washington County and the broader region.

None of this happens without the help of the community, and especially you. Thank you for your membership, your donations, your volunteer hours, and your belief in what this place represents. Hooker Hall has stood for one hundred years — and with your continued support, it will stand for one hundred more.

Warmly and with gratitude,

*Wes Higgins*

*President, Snake River Heritage Center Board of Directors*

## Treasurer's Message

Dear Members and Supporters,

As your Treasurer, I am pleased to share a financial report reflecting both the challenges and the triumphs of this remarkable centennial year. 2025 was a year of investment – in our building, our programs, and our future – and I am proud to say that our community's generosity met every challenge we faced.

The single most significant financial undertaking of the year was the repair of the Grand Ballroom floor joists. This critical structural project was made possible entirely through donor contributions, and we owe an enormous debt of thanks to every individual and organization that contributed. The completed repairs not only preserved a historic treasure but opened new revenue opportunities through expanded event rentals. Additional building projects included adding air conditioning to the ballroom and significant repair on the foundation to prevent water from damaging many of our stored artifacts.

Revenue in 2025 was buoyed by our centennial event series. The May Day Tea Party, the Dutch Oven Gathering, the Murder Mystery Dinner, and the Haunted History of Weiser each generated ticket revenue and brought new members and donors into our community. Membership dues remain a cornerstone of our operating budget, and we encourage all supporters to maintain or upgrade their memberships as we head into 2026.

On the expense side, we have been carefully managing operating costs while investing strategically in improvements. Plans to revitalize the Gift Shop represent both a near-term expense and a meaningful long-term revenue opportunity. Similarly, ongoing publication projects, including our partnership with local authors, help generate income while fulfilling our educational mission.

As we plan for 2026, our budget reflects continued investment in programming, facility maintenance, and visitor experience improvements. We remain committed to transparency, responsible stewardship, and pursuing every grant and funding opportunity available to a non-profit of our size and mission.

Detailed financial statements are available to members upon request. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

*Gina Applegate*

*Treasurer, Snake River Heritage Center Board of Directors*

## Our Volunteers: The Heart of the SRHC



The Snake River Heritage Center simply could not exist without its extraordinary volunteers. From our Master Docents who guide museum tours with passion and expertise, to the dedicated hands who staff our events, maintain our exhibits, and welcome guests at the door – our volunteers are the living soul of this institution.

Unlike many museums that operate on a fixed schedule, the SRHC offers tours by appointment, and it is our remarkable volunteer team that makes this flexibility possible. Thanks to their dedication, we can accommodate last-minute tour requests and welcome school groups, families, and individuals at times that work for them. Our Master Docent, Dottie Emert, has been an

invaluable leader in this effort, coordinating tour guides and ensuring every visitor leaves with a deeper appreciation for Washington County's history. In 2026, we plan on having dedicated open hours!

Our centennial event series placed additional and joyful demands on our volunteer corps. Dozens of volunteers contributed their time and talents to make the May Day Tea Party, the Dutch Oven Gathering, the Murder Mystery Dinner, and the Haunted History of Weiser the memorable experiences they became. But we also need volunteers to keep us operational day-to-day!

Kathy Trevino has been helping since April of 2022. After she and her husband moved to the area, she was looking for a way to meet new people and help her new community. She heard that the museum needed a bit of cleaning and she showed up to help. She has been coming every Wednesday ever since.



Brenda Nauman has been volunteering since July of 2022. She was homeschooling her daughter and took her to the museum as part of their history class. She has been coming every Wednesday since.

Our most marvelous docent extraordinaire, Dottie, lines them out with her current task (cleaning, changing and or adding new displays and sometimes pretty physical stuff) and they carry out Dottie's vision. It is amazing to watch and even better to participate in! After the third-floor repair, they were instrumental in rebuilding all of the displays.

Jeri Kleppin has been with the museum for many years, serving for some time as a Board Member. As you know, she now spends her time in the library dealing with each photo, book, and article we have. Sometimes LuGene Waker helps her with this task as well.

Sarah Borda has been a Board Member since November of 2023. She has quickly become a very valuable asset to the museum. Her knowledge of history paired with an uncanny ability to date any photograph is simply amazing. She is taking on the task of overhauling our gift shop but most importantly digitizing every photo and information about our thousands of artifacts. And, she does it with unmatched enthusiasm.

And, there are many, many more! Come meet them! We have regular volunteer hours every Monday and Wednesday mornings.

We are always seeking new volunteers to join our team! Whether your passion lies in history, hospitality, event coordination, artifact preservation, or administrative support, there is a place for you here. If you are interested in serving the SRHC as a volunteer, please visit our website at [snakeriverheritagecenter.org](http://snakeriverheritagecenter.org) or contact us at 208-549-0205.

## 2025 Events: A Century Worth Celebrating

2025 was defined by celebration. With Hooker Hall turning 100 years old, the SRHC board was determined to mark the milestone with events as memorable as the building itself. The result was a year-long series of centennial birthday celebrations that brought together community members, history enthusiasts, and new friends of the museum.

### *May Day Tea Party*

The centennial celebration kicked off in grand style with the May Day Tea Party, a gracious and festive gathering held in honor of Hooker Hall's 100th year. Guests were invited to dress in their finest vintage or spring attire and enjoy an afternoon of elegant refreshments, conversation, and history. Well over 100 people showed up. The Tea Room provided a beautiful backdrop for this genteel celebration, with tables set to evoke the refined era of the building's early decades. Attendees enjoyed finger sandwiches, scones, and a selection of fine teas, while docents shared stories of the Intermountain Institute's storied past. The event sold out quickly and reminded us all that the SRHC's Tea Room is one of Weiser's most uniquely charming gathering spaces.

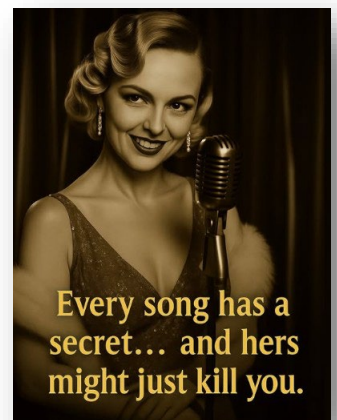


### *Dutch Oven Gathering*

No celebration of Idaho heritage would be complete without a nod to the culinary traditions of the American West, and the Dutch Oven Gathering delivered in delicious fashion. This beloved event brought together home cooks, outdoor enthusiasts, and history lovers for a hands-on celebration of pioneer cooking traditions. Participants demonstrated and shared recipes prepared in classic cast-iron Dutch ovens, including hearty stews, breads, cobblers, and other frontier favorites. The gathering was both a feast and a living history lesson, capturing the self-reliant spirit that built communities like Weiser in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

### *Murder Mystery Dinner*

Hooker Hall has never looked quite so suspenseful as it did on the evening of the Murder Mystery Dinner! Guests were transported into an immersive theatrical experience set against the atmospheric backdrop of the historic building. Characters, clues, and dramatic twists unfolded across the dinner as attendees worked to solve the mystery. The event was a resounding success – tickets sold out rapidly and the evening generated significant buzz, introducing the SRHC to a new audience of community members who may never have otherwise visited the museum. Plans are already underway to bring the Murder Mystery Dinner back for an encore.



Every song has a secret... and hers might just kill you.

## ***Haunted History of Weiser***

As autumn settled over Washington County, the SRHC offered its most spine-tingling centennial celebration yet: the Haunted History of Weiser. This atmospheric evening event wove together the genuine local history of Weiser and the surrounding region with tales of mystery, folklore, and the unexplained. Guides led guests through the storied rooms of Hooker Hall, sharing stories that ranged from the fascinating to the eerie. The event was enormously popular and served as a reminder that history is not always found only in textbooks – sometimes it lingers in the very walls around us.



These four signature events — the May Day Tea Party, the Dutch Oven Gathering, the Murder Mystery Dinner, and the Haunted History of Weiser — collectively attracted hundreds of attendees and meaningfully advanced our mission of connecting the community to Washington County's remarkable history. Each one was a true birthday gift to Hooker Hall.

## ***Other 2025 Highlights***

Beyond the centennial series, 2025 included our annual museum tours, school and group visits arranged through our volunteer docent program, and ongoing community partnerships. The SRHC also hosted a variety of private events in our rental spaces, demonstrating the growing appeal of Hooker Hall as a unique and historic venue for gatherings of all kinds.

## 2026 Planned Events: Looking Ahead

Building on the momentum and community enthusiasm of our centennial year, the SRHC board is excited to announce a robust calendar of events for 2026. While details are still being finalized, here is a preview of what our members and the community can look forward to:

### ***2026 Quilt Show***

The SRHC's signature Quilt Show returns in 2026! This beloved annual tradition (which has been on pause for many years) celebrates the textile arts and the remarkable skill of quilters from across the region. Registration is open for quilters who wish to exhibit their work. Visit [snakeriverheritagecenter.org](http://snakeriverheritagecenter.org) to register.

### ***Murder Mystery Dinner — Return Engagement***

By popular demand, the Murder Mystery Dinner is planned for a return engagement in 2026. Our first installment sold out quickly, and we expect the sequel to be equally – or even more – in demand. Watch for ticket announcements on our website and social media channels.

### ***Haunted History of Weiser — Season Two***

The community's response to the Haunted History of Weiser made it clear: this event has become a beloved autumn tradition. We are planning an expanded and refined version for fall 2026, with new stories, new characters, and deeper dives into the mysteries of Washington County's past.

### ***Continued Centennial Programming***

While 2025 marked the official centennial, the SRHC intends to continue weaving the story of Hooker Hall's first hundred years into our programming throughout 2026. Expect new special exhibits, invited speakers, and commemorative publications that honor this remarkable milestone.

### ***Community and Educational Events***

We are committed to expanding our school tour and community education programs in 2026. New exhibit installations in progress will deepen the museum's coverage of irrigation and agriculture history, mining history, local heroes, and the automotive age in Idaho. More details will be announced as plans are finalized. Follow us at [snakeriverheritagecenter.org](http://snakeriverheritagecenter.org) or call 208-549-0205 to stay informed.

## Community Spaces: Hooker Hall's Storied Rooms

One of the SRHC's most important roles in the community is as a gathering place – a venue where Washington County residents can celebrate, create, learn, and connect in a setting of genuine historic significance. Hooker Hall offers three distinctive rental and event spaces, each with its own character and charm.

### ***The Grand Ballroom***

The crown jewel of Hooker Hall is undoubtedly the Grand Ballroom. A sweeping, elegant space that has hosted generations of dances, performances, and community gatherings, the Ballroom is now available once again following the successful completion of the 2025 floor joist repair project. This critical restoration, made possible entirely through the generosity of our donors, ensures that the Ballroom will continue to serve the community for another century. The space is ideal for large events including weddings, receptions, fundraising galas, concerts, and community celebrations. Its historic character is simply irreplaceable.

### ***The Tea Room***

The SRHC's Tea Room is a uniquely intimate and charming space that has become a favorite among community members for smaller gatherings. As showcased during the 2025 May Day Tea Party, the Tea Room is perfectly suited for afternoon teas, bridal and baby showers, club meetings, birthday celebrations, and private luncheons. The room's historic ambiance evokes the refined domestic culture of an earlier era and provides a backdrop that no modern venue can replicate. The Tea Room accommodates smaller groups and can be arranged to suit a variety of event styles.

### ***The Auditorium / Theater***

Hooker Hall's Auditorium and Theater space provides a dramatic and versatile setting for performances, lectures, screenings, and community presentations. With seating for an audience and a dedicated performance or presentation area, this space supports the SRHC's mission of education and cultural enrichment. It has hosted living history presentations, theatrical performances, and speaker series, and is available for community rental. The Auditorium represents a rare opportunity for performers and organizations in Washington County to utilize a space with genuine historic gravitas.

All three spaces are available for rental. For inquiries, scheduling, and pricing information, please contact us at 208-549-0205 or visit [snakeriverheritagecenter.org/rental-spaces](https://snakeriverheritagecenter.org/rental-spaces). We welcome the opportunity to host your next event in one of Weiser's most historic and beloved buildings.

## Publications: Preserving History in Print

A core part of the SRHC's mission is to preserve and share Washington County's history not only through museum exhibits and community events, but through the written word. We are proud to support local authors and to make authoritative historical publications available through our Gift Shop and programming.

### ***Lucifer's Lust: A History of the Seven Devils Mining District***

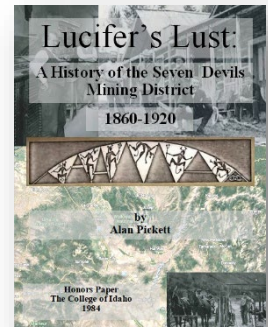
We are delighted to highlight one of the most significant regional history publications in recent memory: *Lucifer's Lust: A History of the Seven Devils Mining District*, authored by Alan Pickett. This richly researched volume tells the dramatic story, with a plethora of photographs, of the Seven Devils Mining District, one of the most colorful and consequential chapters in the history of western Idaho and the Snake River region.

The Seven Devils country – rugged, remote, and extraordinarily mineral-rich – drew prospectors, dreamers, and entrepreneurs from across the American West and beyond. Their stories are ones of fortune sought and lost, of communities built in the wilderness, of the extraordinary human effort required to extract wealth from some of the most challenging terrain in Idaho. Pickett's history brings these stories to life with careful research, vivid detail, and a storyteller's eye for the human dimension behind the historical record.

Lucifer's Lust is available for purchase at the SRHC Gift Shop.

It makes an outstanding gift for history enthusiasts, Idaho residents, and anyone interested in the story of the American West.

Contact us at 208-549-0205 or visit us in person to obtain your copy.



The SRHC is committed to supporting local and regional historians and to making publications like this one widely available. We encourage members and visitors to explore our full publications collection, which covers topics ranging from the history of the Intermountain Institute to the agricultural development of Washington County.

### ***Upcoming Publications***

The SRHC board continues to explore opportunities to develop and publish additional historical works that deepen the community's understanding of our region's rich past. If you are a local historian, author, or researcher interested in partnering with the SRHC on a publication project, we would love to hear from you.

## Gift Shop: A Fresh Look for a New Century

The SRHC Gift Shop has long been a favorite stop for museum visitors seeking a meaningful memento of their time at Hooker Hall. As we enter our post-centennial era, the board has approved exciting plans to revitalize and expand the Gift Shop – making it a destination unto itself and a significant contributor to our operating revenues.

The updated Gift Shop will feature a curated selection of merchandise that reflects the history, character, and collections of the Snake River Heritage Center. Planned updates include:

- Expanded selection of locally authored historical publications, including *Lucifer's Lust* and other regional history titles.
- SRHC-branded merchandise including apparel, tote bags, and commemorative items celebrating Hooker Hall's centennial (Yes, the “Support your Local Hooker” shirts will return!)
- Artisan and craft items sourced from local Washington County makers, supporting regional artists while complementing our historical mission.
- Educational materials, maps, and reproductions related to the Intermountain Institute, the Seven Devils Mining District, and Washington County history.
- Improved physical layout and display fixtures to create a more inviting and browsable shopping experience.
- Potential for an online component, allowing supporters from outside the region to purchase SRHC merchandise and publications.

The revitalized Gift Shop is expected to open in its updated form in 2026. We welcome suggestions from members and visitors about products and materials you'd like to see available. Your input helps ensure the Gift Shop truly reflects the interests and tastes of our community.

Revenue from Gift Shop sales directly supports the SRHC's operating budget and preservation efforts, so every purchase is a meaningful contribution to our mission. Thank you for shopping local – and shopping historical.

## Thank You for Your Support

*The Snake River Heritage Center exists because of your generosity, your curiosity, and your belief in the power of history.*

[snakeriverheritagecenter.org](http://snakeriverheritagecenter.org) | 208-549-0205 | 2295 Paddock Ave, Weiser, ID 83672