11th Annual

HERITAGE HOMES TOUR

MID-CENTURY MODERN

THE HIGHLANDS

OCTOBER 6, 2013

PRESERVATION IDAHO
THE IDAHO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL

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For 41 years, Preservation Idaho has worked to preserve Idaho’s historic and cultural resources through education and advocacy. As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, we rely solely on the support of individuals, corporations, and foundations to support our mission.

The Heritage Homes Tour has become our largest annual fundraiser. This year features nine mid-century modern homes in The Highlands. Modernism, notable for its use of flat roofs, glass, deep overhangs, natural and manmade materials and indoor/outdoor space, is well represented in this year’s homes. These homes embrace foothills views while defining a lifestyle of elegant informality which became popular after the greater conventionality of the pre-WWII era. Remarkably The Highland’s historic and architectural legacy is still appreciated by current generations of modernists.

With mounting pressures from continuous growth and a changing population, it is more important than ever to preserve our historic and cultural resources, to promote the smart reuse of historic properties, and to educate the community at-large of the value of Idaho’s heritage.

Historic places represent a snapshot in time, a reminder of the path we have taken and the base upon which our future is built. We believe that preservation is an essential element in improving our communities and neighborhoods. The homes you visit today offer great ideas and inspiration for your own home’s potential or rehabilitation.

Preservation Idaho thanks you for coming today and we are grateful for our members who have organized the tour and volunteered to make today memorable for you. We are also indebted to the homeowners who steward these historic places and have worked hard to enhance and share these beautiful historic homes with you.

Have an enjoyable time and consider membership for yourself today!

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Expect More
The Highlands neighborhood extends northeast from Boise’s downtown core and North End along an incline that follows topography shaped by Crane Creek and the foothills at the southern edge of the Boise Front. Today, mid-century homes, lush lawns, and green trees create a cool inviting oasis. Although major settlement was concentrated near the Boise River there were a few farms established along Crane Creek in the 1860s. Dr. Charles H. Crane, for whom Crane Creek is named, located a farm just north of the present day intersection of Harrison Boulevard and Hill Road. Boise pioneer school teacher and farmer Franklin B. Smith patented 160 acres of land in 1888 on land that would become The Highlands. But by the early 1950s when the neighborhood was developed, the area was arid and open with surrounding hillsides dotted by sagebrush.

Following World War II, Boise boomed and grew as a center for state and federal regional offices as well as new private industries. The national trend for suburban housing development began in 1946 and by 1960 substantially more of Boise’s population lived outside the city limits than within. The pattern of Boise’s growth following the war was similar to other communities across the nation. Nationwide, homeownership in the postwar period was equated with the attainment of middle class status. Ownership of a single family home became the American Dream.

New developments and modern architecture lured residents to build homes among the foothills north of Boise. J.R. Simplot Company began the development of Boise Heights in 1953. Richard B. Smith, a local real estate agent and developer, began The Highlands project in 1955 on land his grandfather Franklin had patented six decades earlier. Smith and co-developers Fred Bagley, Ted Eberle, and Robert Kinsinger would transform Boise’s northern boundary as they developed a new subdivision for a growing city.

Construction started in Highlands Units 1 and 2 in 1955. A new marketing scheme called a Parade of Homes was used to promote the neighborhood. This concept was credited as the brain child of the Salt Lake City Home Builders Association, who held such an event in Salt Lake City in 1946. Boise followed suit with its first parade in 1956. Ten model homes were built on Crane Creek Road by local builders and suppliers who constructed, finished, and furnished the houses. The event was timed to coincide with National Home Week during the last week of September. The Parade was publicized a month ahead in the Idaho Statesman with reports that identified the various plans for the homes. Advertised as a family event, children could enjoy pony rides and clowns while their parents viewed the homes. The Boise Junior Chamber of Commerce had a refreshment stand while hostesses were stationed at each house to show off all the modern conveniences. Realtors, builders, and interior designers worked together to introduce Boiseans to new homes mainly built in the popular Ranch style.

Highland homes have a variety of mid-century style houses and several variations on the Ranch style. Although many of the houses are built from plans a number of The Highlands homes were designed by architects too. The houses followed the topography of the hills and are typically placed on large lots off curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. The curved streets reflect the move away from the gridiron street plan popular during the early 20th century to the curvilinear streets which helped to slow traffic and minimize entry to the neighborhood. Extensive tree planting and landscaping have changed the arid landscape into grassy lawns filled with large shade trees.

The proximity to downtown and yet country feel of The Highlands was a selling point for the new subdivision. By 1961 the subdivision’s population reached over a thousand. A new school, Highlands Elementary School, was constructed and opened for students in 1964. The neighborhood grew as families purchased building lots and constructed houses in the popular area. Neighborhood residents were not the only ones to enjoy The Highlands. When as early as 1966, the neighborhood became known for its colorful Christmas light display. The annual light display would be tradition for many years.

The Highlands also gained nationwide recognition in 1961 when the “Highlands Community Fallout Shelter” was constructed. It was the first prototype community fallout shelter in the United States spurred by fears of nuclear war. The building was funded by the Federal Civil Defense Agency and from the sale of stock—which was available on a family-share basis. Other amenities attracted home buyers including the Crane Creek Country Club and the Highlands Baptist Church built on land provided by Richard B. Smith. Smith continued to be involved in the subdivision’s development to the start of a new century. In 1971 the Idaho Statesman reported on the construction of the 500th Home in the subdivision incorporating new housing styles that had evolved since the 1950s. The Highlands neighborhood remains a popular and sought after location for homebuyers and includes intact examples of mid-century architecture.

Although not designated as a historic district The Highlands neighborhood is an important facet of Boise’s history. Many houses in the neighborhood have turned 50 years old – the age at which the National Park Service will consider buildings for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. There are good examples of mid-century architecture which retain architectural integrity, reflecting the style, materials, and landscaping of the time. The Highlands neighborhood provides significant information about Boise’s post World War II era housing.

Mid-century architecture in Boise and nationwide is slowly being accepted for its historical and architectural importance. At this time no mid-century neighborhood in Boise has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places or as a local historic district. Houses in The Highlands are not protected from inappropriate alterations or demolitions for owners who want newer and larger homes. Cities and towns evolve over time and architectural diversity with architectural examples from all eras is important to creating a livable community. Tours like the Heritage Homes Tour can benefit historic neighborhoods and educate the public about the importance of architecturally and historically sensitive alterations.
When Glenn and Grace Buettner purchased their lot on Ranch Road from The Highlands Inc. in April of 1957, that portion of the subdivision had not yet been opened to development. Completed in 1958 to a design by Buettner, the house incorporates many of the hallmarks of mid-century modernism espoused by prominent architects of the day as evidenced in the use of pink Arizona sandstone, clean lines, flat roof, exposed laminated beams, and an open floor plan that provides privacy from the street while maximizing the views available at the rear of the lot. A prominent garage reflects the mid-century fascination with and reliance on the personal automobile.

An Idaho Statesman article from February of 1959 describes the new home’s modern functionality along with its décor. A statement regarding built-in furniture notes that it provides “an abundance of open floor space and an ultra-modern appearance.” Interior design details included Asian and Middle Eastern art from the Buettner’s travels along with a color scheme in the family and living rooms of “flamingo pink, coral, and Chinese red.” Another interior feature was wallpaper designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The article notes Glenn’s particular pride in electrical master switches which could control lighting throughout the house. Other space-age features included hidden speakers for the built-in record player and an indoor barbecue.

Glenn Buettner was born in Nampa, Idaho in 1921. After graduating from Boise High School, he studied at Boise Junior College before graduating from the University of Minnesota with a degree in electrical engineering. A job with International Bechtel took him to Saudi Arabia where he met Grace Kailbourn of Pennsylvania. Her own career had already taken her to the Caribbean and Korea. They married in Beirut, Lebanon in 1950 where he worked for the Transarabian Pipeline Company. Following the birth of two daughters, the family returned to Boise in 1956. Glenn worked as architect and chief engineer for Albertson’s until his retirement in 1967. The Buettners sold the house and moved to Mesa, Arizona in 1978 where they resided until their deaths in the late 1990s.

Jack and Beverly Peck acquired a mortgage from the Provident Federal Savings and Loan in December of 1956 in the amount of $14,400. This modest sum was likely the combined value of both the purchase price for their lot in Unit No. 1 of The Highlands and the construction cost of their new home to which they moved in 1957. Though unattributed to any particular architect, the design of the home emphasizes many aspects of post-war contemporary architectural trends. These trends are exhibited in the home’s rectilinear massing, shallow, cross-gabled roofs with deep eaves, clerestory windows which provide privacy for the street-facing elevations, and integration of both concrete block and board and batten siding. These exterior materials in particular reference – perhaps inadvertently – the Usonian houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. In 1977, a remodel of the home was completed that converted the garage, originally located to the left of the present front door, to a new entry, living room, and bedroom. These alterations, completed for $5,000, are sympathetic to the original design of the home.

Born in Oklahoma in 1918, Jack Peck was raised in Boise where he graduated from Boise High School in 1935. At the time he moved into the house on Tartan, Peck was working as a salesman for Moore Business Forms, Inc. His wife Beverly was a typist at the State Department of Law Enforcement. The Pecks lived in the home only briefly. By 1960, they were no longer listed at the address. Jack later moved to Billings, Montana where he died in 1992.

The short ownership and occupancy of the Pecks was a precursor to a series of occupants throughout the 1960s and 70s. Most stayed for only a year or two. These residents included a watch salesman, a doctor in the US Army, an insurance salesman, an attorney, and the director of the State Maternal and Child Health Services. The relatively long tenure of the present owners has lasted the better part of two decades.
On September 13, 1956, Lawrence (Larry) and Virgie Colton purchased the lot at the corner of Heather and Tartan from Guy and Beatrice Stephenson. The Stephensons had acquired the lot in Unit No. 1 from The Highlands Inc. in March. On that same date in September, the Coltons secured a mortgage from the Prudential Insurance Co. – Larry’s place of employment – in the amount of $10,700. That unpretentious amount likely covered the cost of both the land and the construction of their house. In 1957, the Coltons moved into their unassuming new Ranch style house.

The typical Ranch house was simple and inexpensive to build. The Ranch traditionally has one story with a rectangular or L-shaped plan and low-pitched roof. It generally has no true porch, but rather a simple extended eave over the entry. The wide side of the house faces the street and gives the appearance of spaciousness. No architect has been identified for the Colton house and it was likely designed and built by a contractor. Before alterations in 2011, the house featured many of the elements identified above. Rose-colored brick and a very shallow side-gabled roof comprised most of the design features of the house. An extended eave over the front entry and a small carport with attached storage provided subtle variation to the rectilinear footprint. A recent remodel extended and enclosed the garage, added a large, shed-roofed, glass-walled entry, adjusted the height and pitch of the roof, and added a wing to the rear.

Larry Colton was born in Colfax, Washington in 1911. The family soon moved to southern Idaho where they farmed in the Nampa area. Colton graduated high school at Nampa in 1931. Virgie Masingill was born in Oklahoma in 1916 before the family moved to Nampa in 1920. She met Larry and married him in 1934 after graduating from Nampa High School in 1933. The couple had two sons and moved to Boise in 1956 where he became staff manager at the Prudential Life Insurance Company. After retirement in 1976 the couple traveled extensively together. Larry died in 2004 and Virgie followed in 2008 having lived in her home for over 50 years.
Two days after Lloyd and Norma Gilkey secured a mortgage from the Provident Federal Savings and Loan in the amount of $21,500 in August of 1963, they purchased the house at 622 W. Highland View Drive from the A. T. Sorensen Construction Company. Alma (Al) Sorensen was a Boise building contractor who was one of ten builders to participate in the original 1956 Parade of Homes. Like many contractor-built houses, the architectural design of the Gilkey House is unattributed, but it is likely that at least two very similar houses in The Highlands were built by Sorensen to the same design. The substantial building features a day-lit basement which takes full advantage of the deep, sloping lot. The modernistic design of the house includes a low-pitched, front-gabled roof arranged symmetrically to either side of a small, recessed entry courtyard. Wood siding, brick piers, and deep eaves with exposed beams accent this well-designed example of mid-century American Internationalism.

Lloyd Gilkey was born in Twin Falls, Idaho in 1926. After attending schools at Twin Falls, Gilkey served three years in the Army during World War II. Norma Robison was born in Kansas in 1928 but moved to Twin Falls with her family when she was three. She graduated from Twin Falls High School in 1945 and married Lloyd Gilkey there in 1947. Together they moved to Boise in 1950 and raised four children. Gilkey worked for the Idaho Sheet Metal Company and was promoted to manager in 1961. The company specialized in power sheet metal tools, stainless steel, food processing equipment, and general sheet metal work. Lloyd Gilkey died in 1972 at the age of 45. Norma survived her husband by nearly 40 years, dying in Boise in 2008.

The Gilkeys sold their house on W. Highland View in 1971. A series of occupants lived in the house until 1975 when it was purchased by Ron and Carol Reagan. Reagan, a dentist, sold the house to his son, the present owner, who grew up in the home. Michael and Shannon Reagan have recently completed a substantial interior remodel of the house which respects its original design aesthetic while adding contemporary touches.

In July of 1962 Steve and Barbara Thomas acquired a mortgage for $25,000. That amount likely included the costs of construction for their new house and the purchase of the lot on N. Argyll Drive. Thomas, a contractor, constructed the house though the origin of the architectural design is unknown. Like many post-war houses, the design is a stylistic continuation of the earlier International Style which was popularized before the Second World War. In order to take advantage of the steep topography of the lot, this example is arranged on three levels with the garage alone occupying the street level. The primary residential space is located a level below the street recessed behind terraced retaining walls. A daylight basement takes up the lowest level of the house and opens onto a spacious rear yard. Deep, bracketed eaves with exposed beams support the flat roof.

Undated architectural plans illustrate an un-built addition that would have been set behind the existing garage on the roof of the present house providing a third level of residential space. Alterations completed during the tenure of the most recent past owner include the relocation of the front door to an outset entry pavilion under a new raised clerestory roof.

Steve Thomas was born in Rosalyn, Washington in 1922 but grew up in Garden Valley and Emmett, Idaho before his parents moved to Boise. He graduated from Boise High School in 1941 where he learned the crafts of building and woodworking. Thomas joined the Navy in 1943 and served as an aircraft machinist in the Pacific before returning home to Boise where he married Barbara Storie in 1953. Over the course of 12 years the couple had six children before later divorcing. In the early 1950s, Thomas founded the Steve M. Thomas Construction Company and built numerous custom homes. His own home on Argyll was surrounded by several in the neighborhood which he also constructed. He later worked in commercial construction in McCall and managed projects for Boise Cascade. Thomas briefly remarried before his death in 1999.

In October of 1965, Thomas sold the house to the first of 11 subsequent owners.
In February of 1961, Clay and Margaret Simons purchased a lot from Title and Trust Company which had purchased dozens of lots from The Highlands Inc. in January. By April, the Simons had signed a mortgage with the Title Insurance Co. in the amount of $24,000. Though the architect of the Simons House remains unknown, the style of the house is readily identifiable as a ubiquitous western Ranch.

In the 1930s, Californian architects introduced the “close to the ground” ranch, finding inspiration in the one-story plan of the Spanish rancho of the Southwest which they adapted to a suburban house type suitable for middle income families. It combined elements of vernacular houses with the Craftsman Bungalow and typically featured a low-pitched roof with deep eaves and a low horizontal profile. By the late 1940s, this new house type, perceived as modern and unpretentious, caught on across the country. This particular example received an American Colonial treatment complete with a fieldstone veneer accented with wide profile siding, multi-pane wood windows with decorative shutters, and a paneled door. A two-story addition to the northeast end of the house slightly alters the original low massing, but a rear addition completed in 2012 provides additional interior space while remaining sympathetic to the original exterior details.

Clay Simons was born in Pennsylvania in 1928 but the family moved to San Bernardino, California during his high school years. After graduation from San Bernardino High School, Simons attended San Bernardino Valley College before serving two years in the US Navy. Having married Margaret (Margo) in 1950, the couple raised three children. Simons graduated law school and practiced briefly but preferred his work at Davidson-Western Plywood Company where he eventually became a top salesman. In 1960, the company opened a Boise office and offered the manager position to Simons. He eventually opened his own plywood business. Simons died in Boise in 2005.

By 1966, the house had been sold to Gordon and Francis Randall who occupied it for twenty years. Randall, an executive with Boise Cascade, oversaw the design of their new corporate offices by the firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill.
In early April of 1965, Eldon and Melva Amos finalized a mortgage with the Capitol Title Co. in the amount of $27,000. A few days later, James Meyers sold the Amos Family their new home on Wyndemere Drive. James Meyers and Meyers Builders Inc. had earlier acquired the lot from The Highlands Inc. and constructed the house. Meyers, a native of Ohio, began working as a carpenter for a contractor following his service in World War II. In 1954 he founded Meyers Builders Inc. which was known for the construction of several brick homes and apartments throughout Boise’s North End.

While no specific architect can be credited with the design of the Amos House, elements of the home reference many aspects of fashionable post-war architectural trends. These trends are exhibited in the home’s rectilinear massing, shallow, cross-gabled roofs with deep eaves, clerestory windows which provide privacy for the street-facing elevations, and integration of both brick and board and batten siding. In particular, the asymmetrical gable of the garage with its exposed beams, brick wall surfaces which partially or fully cover the primary elevations, and recessed entryway with glass sidelights and colorful spandrel panels, are indicative of mid-century stylistic hallmarks.

Eldon Amos was born in Missouri in 1920 but moved with his family to Castleford, Idaho in 1929. After graduation from Castleford High School, Amos joined the 116th Engineers of the Idaho Army National Guard. He saw active duty in the Pacific Theater until 1945. He married Melva Driesel, a native of Oklahoma, in December of 1945 and they moved to Pocatello, Idaho where Eldon attended Idaho State University’s College of Pharmacy. He graduated in 1951 and after periods in Richland, Washington and Hailey, Idaho, Eldon and Melva and their two children moved to Boise in 1959. He worked for other pharmacists before opening the Amos Idaho Drug store on Main Street. As early as 1962, the family lived on Ranch Road in the Lower Highlands before purchasing their new house in the Upper Highlands in 1965. The couple divorced in 1973 and Melva died in 1975. Eldon later remarried before dying in 1990.

When constructed in 1960, the Earl and Kathleen Chandler House was one of the first in the Upper Highlands. The house was designed by the Chandler’s nephew, Frank Brown, and represents one of only a few executed designs in his brief architectural career. Brown’s modernist approach to architecture resulted in a unique design which is adopted from the site and its setting. It takes full advantage of sun exposure and prevailing winds while incorporating natural materials such as redwood exterior siding and affords privacy while fully integrating the lot’s stunning views in outdoor and indoor living spaces. The result of these architectural concepts is a house, which when viewed from above, roughly takes the form of a spiral-shaped nautilus with sleeping and service spaces arranged around a central, circular living space.

Frank Brown, son of McCall, Idaho’s timber baron Warren Brown, was 22 and a senior in the University of Colorado’s architecture program in 1959 when asked to create the design for his aunt and uncle. The house, his senior project, was conceived while Brown was a member of the 1960 US Olympic Alpine Ski Team. Construction of the building was overseen by Earl Chandler who acted as his own general contractor managing the work of builder Mel Singley. Kathleen Chandler coordinated the home’s interior decoration, many features of which remain in place.

Earl Chandler was born in Bonners Ferry, Idaho in 1922. Having attended the University of Idaho on a football scholarship, Chandler served in the US Army during World War II. After moving to Boise in 1946, he was a national field representative of the American Legion before organizing Chandler Supply Company in 1956. By the late 1970s Chandler’s lumber wholesale operation was active around the nation and was a major supplier to the manufactured housing industry. His civic engagement includes service as a trustee of the Boise School District, the presidency of the Bogus Basin Recreation Association, and a stint as director of The Highlands Community Center. Marriage to Kathleen Jones of Malad, Idaho produced three sons.
In May of 1962 The Highlands Inc. sold a lot in the Upper Highlands to Ethel Chapman, President and owner of The Mode Ltd. department store. At the end of 1963 she completed paperwork for a $60,000 dollar mortgage from the Title and Trust Co. and moved into the house in 1964. Chapman selected Jedd Jones of the Boise architectural firm of Hummel, Hummel, and Jones as her architect. Jones had been the architect for the reconstruction of her department store after a devastating fire in 1958, and he was highly sought as a residential designer with commissions on Warm Springs Avenue and Harrison Boulevard. The striking modernistic house that he designed was a significant departure from the massive, sandstone and half-timbered Tudor Revival home on Warm Springs Avenue that Chapman had occupied since 1932.

The Highland View house capitalized on the best aspects of mid-century American Internationalism and stunning views of downtown. Clean lines, flat roofs, and interior and exterior walls faced in quartzite are accented by a recessed, open, entry approach, an exquisite, multi-vaulted pavilion roof above the living room, and a beautifully-rendered original metal gate accessing the tiled courtyard near the street. A sympathetic bedroom addition at the west end commissioned by the home’s third owner in the late 1990s required the re-opening of the original source of Oregon quartzite.

Ethel Dolson was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1894 but soon moved with her family to Denver, Colorado. There she met, and in 1915, married John Chapman, a childhood friend. Chapman, an accountant, worked in Denver and Casper, Wyoming where he began a career in retail management. The Chapmans moved to Boise in 1930 where John accepted the position of General Manager for C. C. Anderson’s Golden Rule department stores. Ethel initially committed herself to civic and volunteer activities but when John purchased The Mode department store in 1938, Ethel began to engage in the business as a buyer and partner in management. After John’s death in 1943, Ethel assumed control of the company which she guided until selling it in 1969. She sold her Highland View home in 1976 and died in Boise in 1988.
Become a Member

We hope you enjoyed today’s tour.

As a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that receives no state or federal funding, Preservation Idaho relies solely on contributions by our members, donors and volunteers to fulfill our mission of preserving Idaho’s historic places through collaboration, education, and advocacy.

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Join online at PreservationIdaho.org
Developer’s advertisement in the 1956 souvenir plan book for The Highlands Parade of Homes.

Courtesy Boise City Department of Arts and History
SPECIAL THANKS TO THE HOMEOWNERS WHO SO GRACIOUSLY OPENED THEIR HOMES AND ALL THE VOLUNTEERS WHO MAKE THIS EVENT POSSIBLE.

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1956 Idaho Statesman advertisement for The Highlands Parade of Homes.
HERITAGE HOMES TOUR
1. 624 W Ranch Rd
2. 2901 N Tartan Pl
3. 2846 W Heather Pl
4. 622 W Highland View Dr
5. 920 N Argyll Dr
6. 821 W Wyndemere Dr
7. 714 W Wyndemere Dr
8. 611 W Wyndemere Dr
9. 105 E Highland View Dr

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