

Wallowa History Center

Preserving Our Past for the Future

The Wallowa History Center works to save the memories, stories, and photographs that define the history and culture of the places we call home.

Newsletter Number 24 • Winter 2016

**A Brief History of the McDonald Family of Wallowa
Compiled by Mary McCrae Burrows**

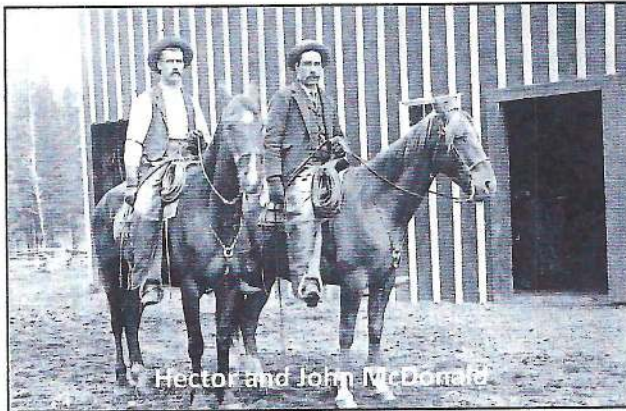
Tribute to John McDonald



John standing alone in front and Hector is holding the horse.

"A kindly man whose activity belied his years is gone. As one of the founders of this community, and where his faith resided, our heritage springs from his pioneering and the pioneering of similar venturesome souls who had caught the vision of this Wallowa Valley. He showed the sturdiness of his stock to the last; he met adversity with a smile, and uncomplaining

and with cheerful mien "wrapped the drapery of his couch about him and lay down to pleasant dreams" This is our tribute to a man we respected." (*Wallowa Sun* editorial June 26, 1941)



The MacDonald Family lived in Shildaig, Applecross Shire, Scotland. It is on the Northwest coast where the land is rugged with many inlets, islands, lakes and rivers.

The McDonalds decided to take the chance of immigrating to the United States, hoping for a better life for their children. John McDonald Sr. and Jane Grant were married in Scotland in 1856 and a year later they left Shildaig on May 27, 1857 sailing from Liverpool, England. At the time, the McDonalds' had one son William who was 4 months old.

Upon joining family members in Illinois, the couple was unsatisfied with the area. Learning of the Land Grant Bill (granting of homesteads) passed by Congress, they joined with a company of friends and in May 1863, the group headed for Oregon. At the time of their journey, the McDonalds had five children, William, John, Christa, Peter and Murdock. In early October, the family entered the Grande Ronde Valley. Instead of homesteading John Sr. bought a farm of 320 acres near the foot of Mt. Emily. The McDonalds prospered in their new home and were active in the formation of the Summerville area of Union Co. Their children were William (1857), John (1858), Christa (1859), Peter (1860), Murdock (1863), Duncan (1865), Hector (1868), and Margaret (1869).



John McDonald

Sons, John and Hector, ventured into Wallowa County to establish homes and help develop the area. As a young man John was a teacher in Union County. Then in 1886, John started to work for the Island City Mercantile and Milling at Island City. When the company decided to build a store in Wallowa, John was asked to take charge of the business and move to Wallowa. He headed the business for the next 3 ½ years. During the depression of 1893 the company decided they could only sell for cash and John resigned his position. He could not ask this of his loyal customers as they were suffering due the circumstances beyond their control. During this time John and his brother Hector were partners and had been filing on homestead land and also purchasing parcels of land. They bought land from Oliver, Chamberlain, Hickman, Sykes and other earlier settlers. John built a home at 103 E

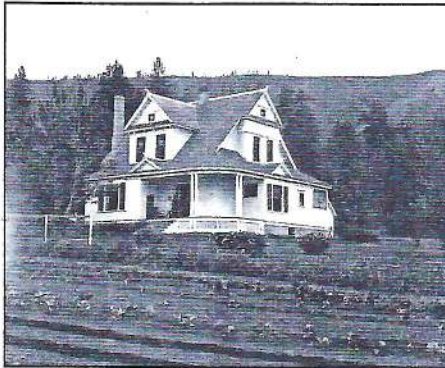
First Street in Wallowa and Hector built a home on the land they had purchased west of Wallowa.

On January 31, 1894, John married Maggie McLean. Maggie McLean was the daughter of John McLean and Delorus Truesdale. She was born in Stark Co, Illinois. She crossed the plains in 1861 with her family who settled in the Grande Ronde Valley. Maggie was very active in the civic affairs in Wallowa. She and John worked together, helping improve the town of Wallowa by supporting their church and the schools. The couple did not have any children but helped raise Claude and Hattie Lockwood,



Maggie McDonald

Maggie's nephew and niece. They also had Patti McLean (Hunter) and Howard McLean in their home after the death of their mother. The McDonalds were instrumental in the building of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. John built the original I.O.O. F. Lodge building, which was demolished when the Wallowa Senior Center was built. Maggie died of a heart attack in 1918. John and Maggie lived in their home on First St for 20 years and after Maggie's death John sold the house.



Hector & Margaret home.

The McDonald brothers were engaged in raising cattle and horses and at one time owned over 4,000 acres. They also had a meat market, dairy farm, and real estate business. John was the first mayor of Wallowa, served as Wallowa County Commissioner for eight years. During this time, the meetings were held quarterly and he made the trip to Enterprise horseback. He also served as County Assessor from 1920 to 1924, and represented Wallowa County at the Oregon State Legislature in the 1913 session.

John received a 25-year jewel as a charter member of the I.O.O.F lodge. He completed 32 degrees in the Masonry. Many of the Mason meetings were held in Enterprise so that was a 20-mile trip horseback.

The local newspaper carried many articles about the McDonald's ranching activities. In the fall of 1910, Hector had a contract to supply 300 tons of timothy hay to a buyer in Portland. He had been averaging a ton and a half per acre. On his best field the yield was two and a half tons. In addition, the McDonalds' had contracts with the government buying and supplying horses for the Calvary. In addition, they raised Clydesdales for the

In 1934 a letter was written by Lee Smith and published in the Wallowa Sun newspaper praising John McDonald for his help to the struggling homesteaders.

"We would buy horses, wagons, or harness, whichever we needed and promise to pay him this fall. Well some of us paid some didn't. He has done more for the poor than any other half dozen men I know. He has done more to build up Wallowa and the County trying to make it a better place to live in. He has paid more school taxes to educate the other fellow's children than any man I know. So I believe John McDonald has helped more poor people than any man in the county." (Smith, 1934)

transfer companies in Portland and the government. They also raised cattle, starting with Shorthorns, but later started raising Herefords.

Hector was born in the Grande Ronde valley on December 24, 1868. Hector made his home on the ranch, which consisted of 1640 acres and he had a fine home. He married Margaret Cameron of Walla Walla, Washington in 1901. The Cameron family was also part of the Wagon train coming west and they settled in Walla Walla, WA. The home they built replaced a log cabin. The McDonald home still stands overlooking Diamond Prairie. Their home was the site of many social functions. Hector did not participate in as many of the local social and civic activities as John and worked managing his ranch after they divided the land. He was a member of the Stanley Lodge of the Masons and the Knights of Pythias lodge. Hector suffered from poor health for many years and died at his ranch home on November 11, 1920. Margaret, with the help of her brother-in-law John, continued to operate the ranch until the ranch was sold to Martin J. Sevier in 1927. Sevier was a member of the commission firm of Sevier and Weed of Portland, Oregon. The sale consisted of 2260 acres all on Diamond Prairie. The deeds of the sale were signed on September 12, 1927.



Miller Hotel on Storie Street donated by Bill Beith



Wallowa History Center

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Wallowa History Center Board: Chairman, Jack Goebel; Vice Chairman, Debbie Lind; Secretary, Marilyn Hulse; Treasurer, Sally Goebel; Carol Ann Meyers, Shirley Olson, Director, Mary Ann Burrows

Membership Application

Please check the category of membership for you.

Individual _____ \$5.00

Couple _____ \$7.50

Family _____ \$10.00

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Greetings from the Wallowa History Center Winter 2016

We appreciate the support we have received from all our members.

Wallowa has a special meaning for all of us who have loved the area.

If anyone would like to submit a story for the newsletter we would appreciate hearing from you. Here are a few of the things we have accomplished this past year.

We are in the process of having the Wallowa Sun converted to digital files, which can be searched. Pearl Alice Marsh donated funds for half of the project. The files for the Wallowa Record are still in the project but they came back incomplete so we are still working on that project.

The BIG READ featured Thornton Wilder this year and his work. Our Town was one of the books. Debbie Lind was in charge of the Wallowa Library part and she had a very good program in coordination with the History Center.

We have had more stories donated to the Center. Dean Trump has written a story of his early life in Wallowa. Marietta Hendrickx donated a story she had written about the Gorbett Family called "Wallowa's North Ridges: The Promised Land". She also compiled a collection of poetry "Gold Nuggets" by Bessie Phillips Gorbett.

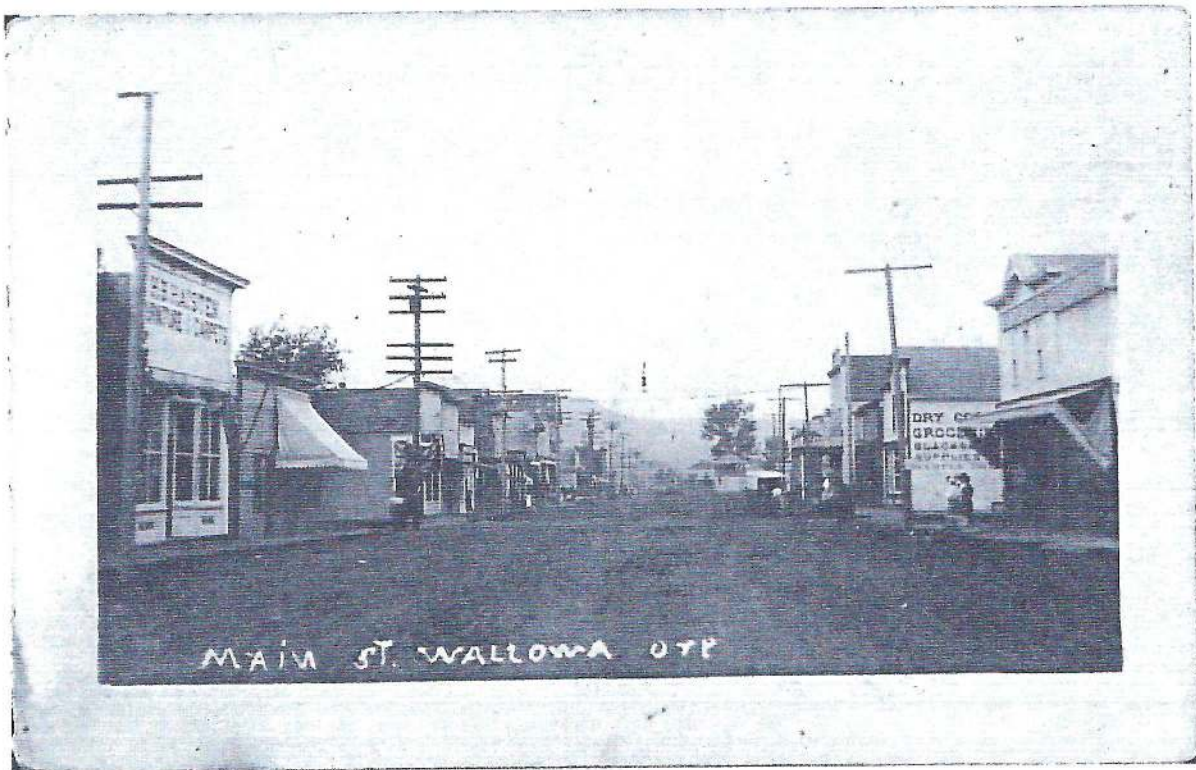
We are keeping up our search for old photos of the area and some were purchased through EBay, donated by Edsil White, Kathy McKenzie Hunter, Ernie Boyd and Judy Hauser. We also had a display of early logging photos at the Josephy Center.

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As a member you can request 3 free
copies of historical photographs from
our archives, and 10% off your
purchases of regional history books.



Early photo of First Street, Wallowa, Oregon c1910