



REXBURG—Our City, Our Story

Vol 3-A

A Newsletter that Celebrates Memories of Rexburg

This newsletter is sponsored by the Rexburg-Madison County Historical Society and is published to promote and preserve the history of Rexburg, Idaho. To continue to receive future volumes of our newsletter or to submit

stories to this newsletter, send your email response to: newsletter@rexburghistoricalsociety.org

What is “REXBURG—Our City, Our Story” This newsletter celebrates Rexburg’s historic past, its buildings, its celebrations, its festivals, its sports, its culture, its people, and **YOU**—your memories and experiences. It is published monthly and sent out to those who request a copy by subscribing to our email list.

The Theme for Volume 3-A is “Main Street-I”

A fun family game is “Three Truths and a Lie.” Let’s play! **Which of the following statements are TRUE and which one is FALSE about Main Street?**

- In an earlier era, when townsfolk had to cross Main Street, they had to watch out for ‘COW PIES.’
- President Heber J. Grant was the Grand Marshall for one of Rexburg’s 4th of July Parades.
- Turkeys were thrown off the roofs of buildings on Main Street to celebrate the 4th of July.
- A couple got married on the corner of Main Street and College Avenue.

Read on...and discover the fascinating history of Rexburg’s Main Street. The next Volume will have additional history about Main Street and the stories of people who had some great times on Rexburg’s main artery.

Section 1: The History of Main Street

Contributed by Louis Clements



Over the years, Rexburg’s Main Street has played a prominent role in community activities. Following are some examples of how important it has been over the years as a center point of celebrations.

In 1908, as a part of the Independence Day celebration, a sham battle was staged on Main Street between Indians and the Idaho National Guard. Patriotism was strong as the Guard won the battle.

Rexburg in the 30s during a Whoopee Days Celebration.

In 1910, a proposal was made to narrow Main Street to twenty feet. Here are some reasons for narrowing the roadway. It would be too expensive to later pave it. It would get rid of muddy streets. My favorite, "The busy American would avoid some businesses because it was time consuming to cross the road." Fortunately, the idea was dropped.

Some said Main Street was TOO WIDE! "The busy American would avoid some businesses because it was time consuming to cross the road."

In 1912, with the largest gathering of people ever assembled in Fremont County (12,000), a wrestling bout was held on Main Street with other July 4th activities.

A Winter Carnival was the main event in 1922. The program consisted of bob sled races, cutter races, dog races, pulling races, and Boy Scout activities. These contests were held on Main Street. Boxing contests were held in the Elk Theater.

The parade on July 4th, 1928, featured all pioneers who crossed the plains. Also included were all Civil War Veterans, Indian War Veterans, and those who came to Rexburg with the first company. Brigham Ricks headed the parade as the Marshall of the Day. "The beautiful float depicting the Logan Temple and grounds won first prize."

In September 1932, the annual Fall Festival and Fashion Show was held on Main Street. Its theme was 'Free Day'. There were barrels of free ice cream, gallons of free lemonade, free sandwiches, free bags of candy, and a free dance. A stage had been built at the intersection of Main Street and College Avenue on which the fashion show was held. Just prior to the fashion show a couple got married on the stand.

The Golden Jubilee was held on Main Street in 1933. An old-fashioned horse-drawn streetcar was to be driven from the depot to uptown by an upper Valley pioneer, making several trips. Every merchant's window held pictures of Rexburg long ago. A stagecoach was parked on Main Street for interested viewers along with the first automobile, a Cadillac owned by Ross Comstock. Businessmen wore calico shirts and businesswomen appeared in petticoats and bonnets. A crowd of 15,000 witnessed the three-day event.



Main Street looking east with an island down the middle.

The Whoopee Days of 1941 included a kangaroo court. Prominent merchants were jailed on Main Street and stayed there until a certain amount of funds were collected to obtain their release. The men were arrested by Whoopee Days Queen candidates. Also, a free show was held on a platform on the street. It was composed of music, hula dancers, a bathing beauty pageant, and a group of trick dogs.

At the end of the school year in 1949, a 'Kid's Day Jamboree' was held. A parade was held on Main Street with prizes being given for the biggest dog, biggest cat, smallest full-grown dog and cat, ugliest dog and cat, etc. Decorated tricycles, wagons, and bicycles filled the streets. Free 'milk nickels' were given to all participants.

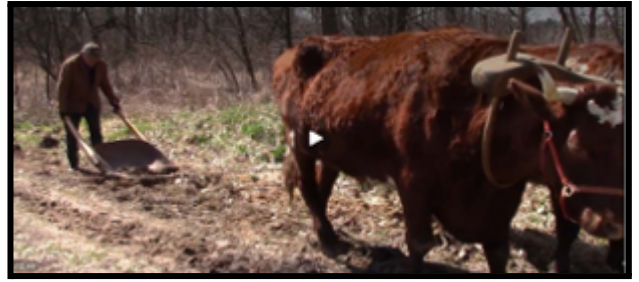
On a personal note, I remember the best 4th of July when a plane flew over town and scattered coupons out the window. These coupons gave a percentage off the sale price at certain merchants in town. The most sought-after coupon was the one featuring a free flight in an airplane around the valley. I was walking through the alley on the north side of Main Street when I spotted a coupon. It was for the plane ride. *What an experience for a seventh grader to take his first plane ride.*

Other Interesting Notes about Main Street's History

How Was Main Street Built? (Contributed by Ken Hart, *Pioneering the Snake River Fork Country* by Louis J. Clements and Harold S. Forbush; page 32.)

Samuel Swanner, one of Rexburg's pioneers, said, "Thomas E. Ricks and his associates accomplished more in two years building roads, fences, bridges, and making general improvements, than I have ever known in the course of five years.

They worked the scrapers night and day because there were only a few of them. Thomas E. Ricks was an excellent manager. He placed men in jobs they were best fitted to perform. The Rexburg pioneers had scarcely enough to live on during the first two years." One might ask, what were these "scrapers" that were kept busy night and day?



Scraper in action.

A scraper is a piece of equipment drawn by oxen or horses to grade or dig up dirt to level a road or dig a canal. [The man working the scraper] lifts up the handles to make it dig into the ground while the oxen are pulling. When it is full of dirt he presses down on the handles making it slip along the ground to the place where he wants to dump it. While moving forward he lifts the handles high up and the front lip will catch in the dirt and he flips it forward dumping the dirt out just behind the oxen.

The Rexburg pioneers probably used a scraper similar to this one to level their roads and dig the canals. It was a lot more efficient than a shovel and a wheelbarrow. The roads, two canals, many ditches, and a 250-acre community plot were done under the direction of church leaders with everyone working together.

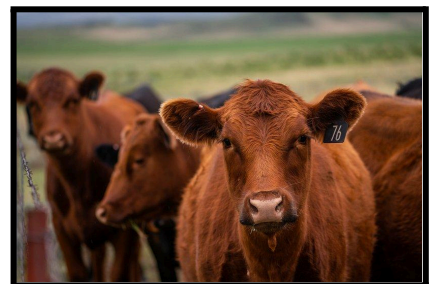
Currently Rexburg's Main Street is 91 feet wide from curb to curb.

A city block was surveyed to contain 10 acres which were divided into 4 lots (2 ½ acres each). It was decided to charge \$12 a season for each lot to receive canal water. The streets were to be 99 feet wide except for Main Street which was 132 feet wide. In Salt Lake City, the blocks were also 10 acres but there were 8 lots on a block (1 ¼ acres each). The streets in Salt Lake were all

132 feet wide; the same as Rexburg's Main Street. Currently Rexburg's Main Street is 91 feet wide from curb to curb.

Cattle Drives Down Main Street (from *Rexburg, Idaho: The First Hundred Years*, p. 75)

Early in 1896, the village trustees passed ordinances intended to stop the driving of livestock down Main Street. The town marshal was to arrest anybody who rode their horse or drove livestock on the sidewalks, or who released their milk cows to graze down the street. The ordinance had an effect on two young men, Joe Young and Charles Zollinger, who herded the townspeople's cows. Zollinger, in



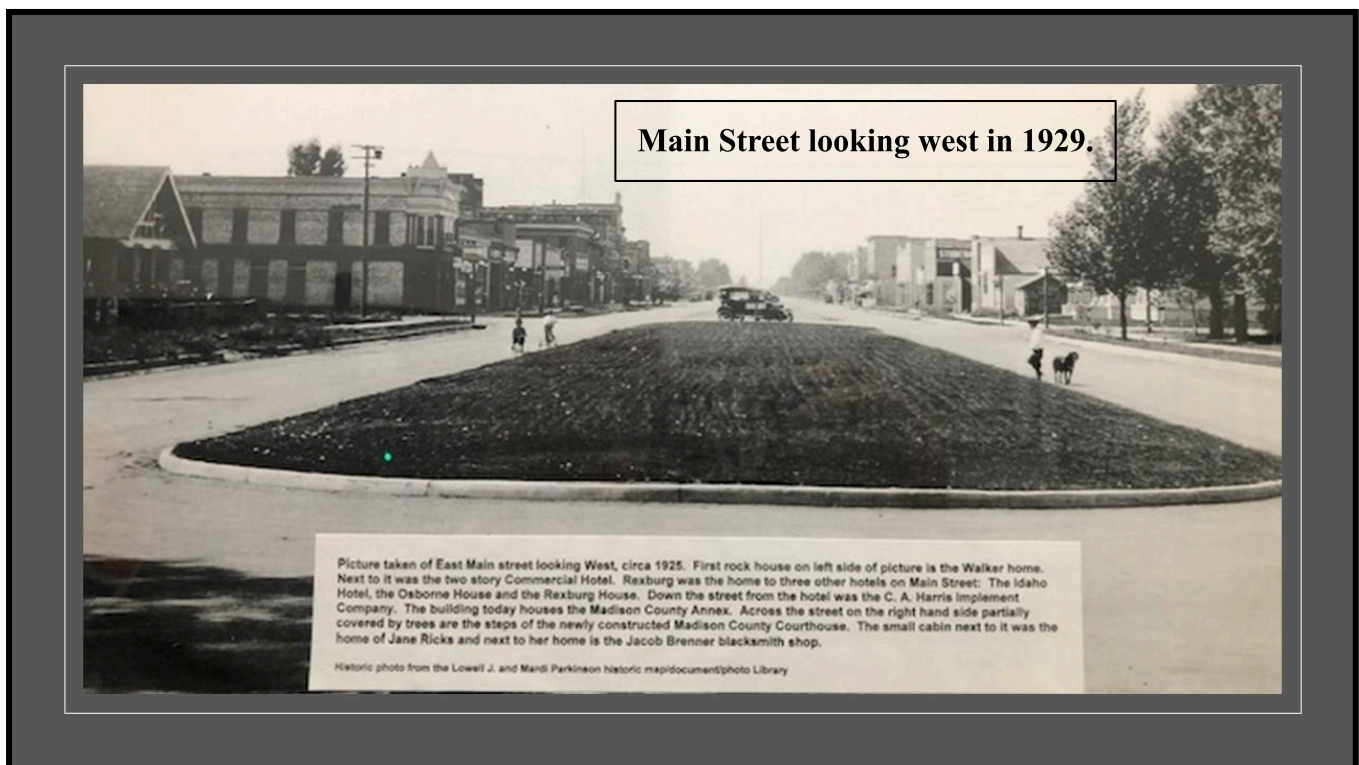
his autobiography, explained that he and Young herded from one hundred fifty to two hundred head from the town to the hills east of town [currently where the hospital and east side of Rexburg is today].



Turkeys on Main Street. (From “*A Walking Tour of Main Street*” by Louis Clements)

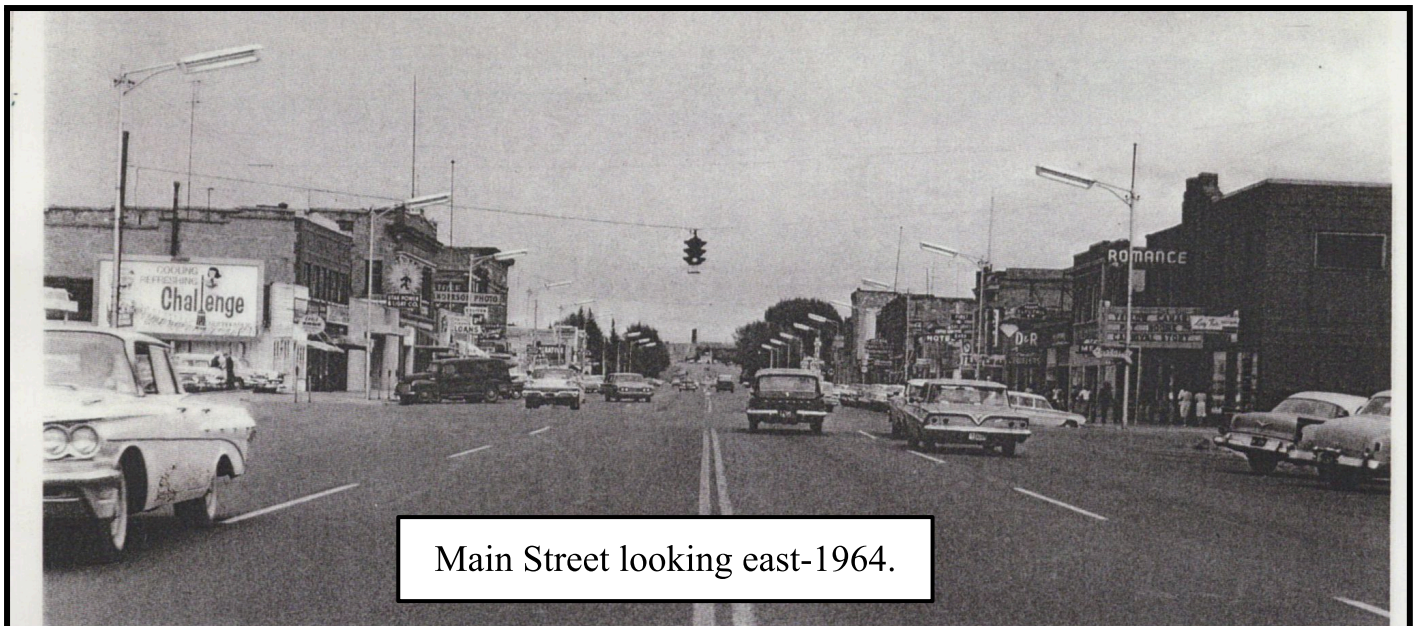
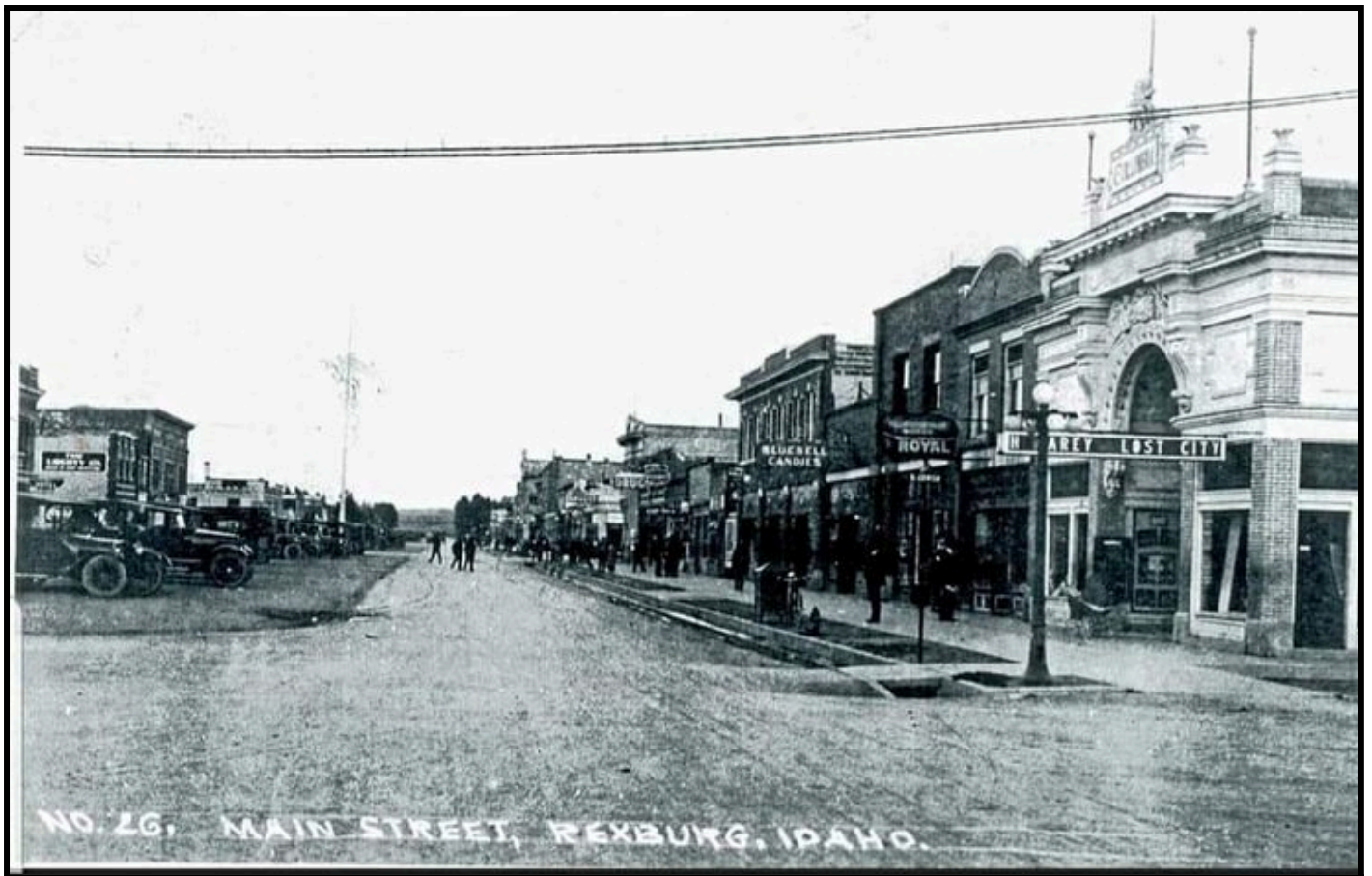
For several years the Rexburg Chamber of Commerce, on July 4th holidays, would throw turkeys from the tops of buildings on Main Street as a prize for anyone who caught them after chasing them through the streets.

Section 2: Main Street Then and Now



For additional pictures of Main Street, go to:

<https://www.rexburg.id.gov/o/cor/page/history>



To Be Continued: Vol 3-B Main Street-II

The next Volume 3-B will contain **YOUR** stories about Main Street. **Do YOU have one?** Please send your story to me at newsletter@rexburghistoricalsociety.org. Your stories are what makes this newsletter interesting! P.S. The story about Heber J Grant as the Parade Marshall is FALSE!

Announcing Flood50 Events



The greatest event to occur on Rexburg's Main Street was on June 6th, 1976, when the Teton Dam Flood inundated downtown Rexburg. This year, 2026, the city is commemorating this event with Flood50.

As June approaches, we mark the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Teton Dam flood, a defining

moment in our region's history. In commemoration, a week of events is being planned to bring people together to Remember, Connect, and Serve.

These events are designed to honor the past, share the story of resilience that shaped Southeast Idaho, and create opportunities for community connection through meaningful, family-friendly experiences. They also provide a chance for those new to the area to learn the history that continues to influence our communities today.

The week will culminate in a special Celebration of Service, an inspiring event featuring music, dance, imagery, and storytelling that highlights the lasting impact of service in our communities.

We invite you to help spread the word and join us. Please consider sharing this information and inviting others, especially those who were part of the flood cleanup or who once called this area home, to be part of this memorable and meaningful commemoration.

Ticketed events (Free but need to schedule)

- 6/1 Monday-70's Fashion Show and Tribute Band at the Romance Theater
- 6/3 Wednesday-Golf Scramble at Teton Lakes Golf Course
- 6/4 Thursday-River Float at the Teton Dam
- 6/5 Friday-Historic Bus Tours from Rexburg to the new Dam overlook, through Sugar City, and back
- 6/6 Saturday-BYU-Idaho Mud Fest at the BYU-Idaho Sports Complex
- 6/6 Saturday-Rexburg Races Teton Dam Marathon, Half-Marathon, and other runs
- 6/6 Saturday-A Celebration of Service at the BYU-Idaho Center

Other fun activities that are occurring through the week are:

- Daily-Service project opportunities include food and blood drives, river clean up, highway clean up, and marathon support
- Daily 10am-4pm – A new Flood Exhibit at Rexburg City Hall
- Tues.-Fri. – Flood Films shown at the Romance Theater

- 6/1 Monday-A 70s car show on Center Street
- 6/5 Friday-A book signing and presentation for a new historic book
- 6/6 Saturday-Daily self-guided walking tours of Main Street in Sugar City and Rexburg with hosted tours
- 6/6 Saturday-A Motorcycle Rally from the Teton Dam to the American Falls Dam

For details, follow our website and social media pages:

Website: [Rexburg Cultural Arts Flood 50](#)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1Cchdog7yy/?mibextid=wwXIfr>

Where do we go from here with this Newsletter?

- 1) If you enjoyed reading this newsletter, **subscribe to future editions** by responding to this email or sending an email to: newsletter@rexburghhistoricalsociety.org.
- 2) Do you have a **memory or story** about Rexburg? Please **send it to us** to build the content of future newsletters. Also, who do you want to nominate as a “**Rexburg Hero?**” Send your submissions via email to the email address of the society: newsletter@rexburghhistoricalsociety.org Your peers, your families, your neighbours, and our new Rexburg residents will want to hear your stories!
- 3) Please **share this newsletter and future newsletters with your FAMILY**. Share these stories at family reunions. Forward the newsletter to your children and grandchildren. That way, the stories of Rexburg and of your life will be carried down to future generations.
- 4) Please **forward this newsletter to former classmates, neighbours, and friends who lived in and who have memories of Rexburg**. If you know who presided over your recent high school class reunion, ask him or her to send this newsletter out to your classmates via email. Give them a chance to send in a memory, to giggle, to remember, and to keep the stories of Rexburg alive.
- 5) To access past newsletters, [please click here](#).

Our Goal: The Rexburg-Madison County Historical Society hopes to have over **500 subscribers** by December 2026. To make that happen, please subscribe to “**REXBURG—Our City, Our Story.**” As of this volume, we have **60 subscribers**. Let’s double that by the next volume!

