

*Originally produced in 2001.  
Updated and reprinted May, 2005  
in observance of the  
2005 Star Mule Days  
held on June 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005*

Sites included in this tour have been selected from the Ada County Historic Site Inventory, which was conducted during 1998, 1999, & 2000. A summary of this work is available in the award winning software book *Patterns of the Past: The Ada County Historic Site Inventory*. Ordering details are available on the Ada County Historic Preservation Council's website at [www.adaweb.net/hpc](http://www.adaweb.net/hpc). Simply click on the Publications link. This and other brochures are available on the same website under the Things to Do link.

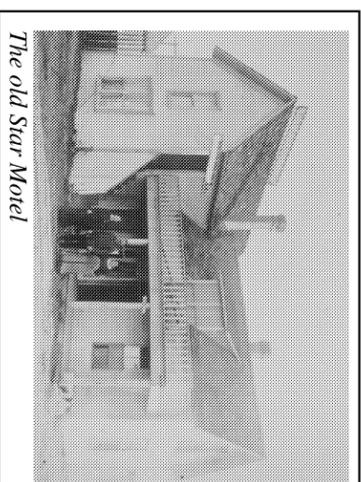
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### **A Brief History of Star, Idaho**

Prior to the discovery of gold in the Boise Valley there was little reason for travelers to curtail their journey west along the Oregon Trail. That changed by 1862-1863 as gold fever created considerable demand to feed the burgeoning mining population (10,000 people within two years) working the Boise Valley and the hills to the north. This created the need for a supply network that led to the early settlement of this central area.

Proximity to the river and the wide expanse of mostly flat land around Star made it a natural place for farms to spring up, as water diversions from sloughs made irrigation of the arid land relatively easy. The first such facility, the Pioneer Ditch of 1863, is credited to M. B. Palmer, with larger scale canal construction occurring in the 1870's.



*The old Star Motel*

Mining required a means of getting to and from the mines, which helped to create new branches of the Oregon Trail. This enhanced transportation network also made Star a convenient stopping point along the route, as the sixteen miles to Boise was a very respectable day's travel by wagon. Later proximity to the railroads of both Boise and Caldwell further added to Star's importance as a trading center.

Exactly how the area came to be known as Star is disputed, but the popular account is that the name relates to the construction of the

first school in the 1870's, located about a mile east of Star Road. After the school was constructed, it was still without a name. One of the builders sawed out a star and nailed it to the front door, so it eventually became known as the Star School. You can imagine how in a landscape of sagebrush and small new farms that this became an important local landmark, with folks using it as a basis for directions to and from farms and businesses in the area. In time, the area simply became known as Star. Another version of the origin of the name suggests that it instead came from a brand of plug tobacco.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought rapid change to Star. It incorporated as a city in 1905, spreading out four miles in all directions. Two years later, electricity was extended from Swan Falls Dam. With it came the Boise & Interurban Railway, connecting Star with the other cities of the valley: Caldwell, Nampa, Meridian, Eagle and Boise. The line was known as the Valley Loop, and it ushered in a time of prosperity for the tiny village, as developers were quick to market thoughts of an idyllic country life to residents of the increasingly congested city.

The importance of the interurban to Star and other rural communities cannot be overstated. In addition to providing convenient transportation to neighboring towns and cities, this rail line was also used to distribute coal via boxcar by the Boise-Payette Lumber Company to the residents of Star and surrounding farms, and to transport fruit and produce to the packing houses in Caldwell.

The interurban ceased operation in 1928, which led to the State of Idaho deciding to pave State Street in 1929. Since Star was responsible for road maintenance within city limits, this significant

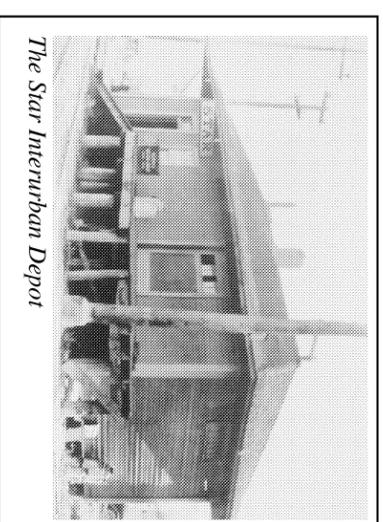
expense brought the prospect of higher taxes, something that was adamantly opposed by the local farmers. Returning the city charter shifted the maintenance burden back to the State, so the city decided to disincorporate in 1929.

Growth finally returned to Star in the 1990s, and a new City of Star that is about one quarter of the size of the original was chartered on December 12, 1997. Today the City looks forward to renewed prosperity as folks once again look to combine the country life with a job in one of the nearby towns and cities.

### **Before you begin . . .**

The structures shown on this approximately 1 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> mile walking tour are only a sampling of the over 60 historic sites surveyed in the Star area in 1998. While they all contribute to Star's considerable heritage, only a few are considered to be individually eligible for possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Being one of the earliest settlements in Ada County, many of Star's modest historic structures are influenced by the Queen Anne style of architecture that was popular from around 1880 until 1910. This style is characterized by steeply pitched or irregular-shaped roofs, pattern shingles and cutaway bay windows.



*The Star Interurban Depot*

# Historic Star Walking Tour



Updated for the 2005 Star Mule Days

Please respect the privacy of the owners of these historic structures. We also ask that you respect their private property rights by only viewing these properties from the public right of way.



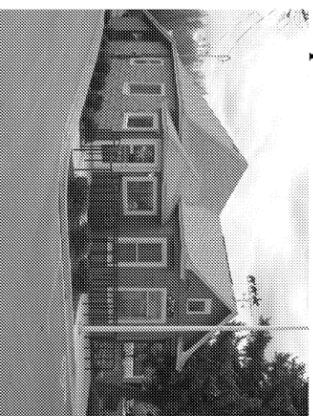
## Suggested Start & End:

### Star Fire House

#### 10831 W. State Street.

It is possible to start and end the walking tour anywhere along the route, but it is recommended to start your journey in the vicinity of the Star Fire House. This was the site of the Interurban Depot from 1907 until the 1950s, when it was moved east from this site to the Haworth Ranch where it was used as a granary. It was later moved near the Star Motel where it was used as a residence before being moved to its present location (Stop #9) and converted for use as a coffee house in 2004.

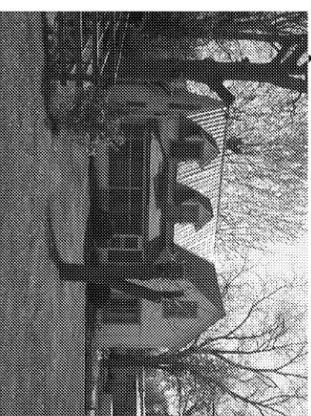
#### Stop 1:



#### 10769 W. State Street

Several examples of vernacular house types are found near Star. This is an example of a circa 1890 four-square design with Queen Anne detailing, including a flared, hipped roof with gabled extension. The original city jail has been restored and moved onto the back of the property. The site and structure was extensively renovated in 2001 for use as Star's City Hall.

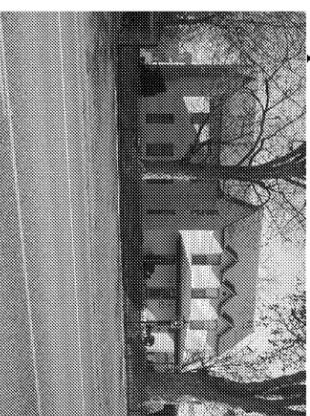
#### Stop 2:



#### 10717 W. State Street

This is a good example of a circa 1890 vernacular farmhouse. It is two stories high with two gabled wall dormers on the west elevation. The house features a historic screened porch with shed roof and a historic shed roofed addition in the rear. The barn on site has a multi-gable roof and was constructed circa 1920.

#### Stop 3:



#### 10600 W State Street

Many houses that were built in the early 1890s lack excessive ornamentation or details. This two-story, gabled roof farmhouse has three small dormers on the front elevation and a hipped roof front porch. Additions have been placed on the north and west facades.

#### Stop 4:

### Star Merc,

#### 11103 W. State Street

While the building is modern, this landmark business dates back to 1908. The business started as the Palmer-Wehr General Store, with W.T. Kirtley having one third ownership. Five years later, in 1913, he became the sole owner. What started with a cracker barrel store over time evolved into a merchantile providing for many of the needs of the local community. In a time of franchise chain stores, this independent business contributes considerably to the unique identity of Star.

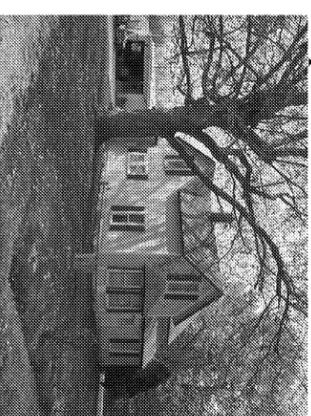
#### Stop 5:



#### 11049 W. Frost Street

Built circa 1925, this house's gabled roof with exposed rafters and knee braces represents the Craftsman style of architecture. It also has wooden boards in the front gable to simulate decorative half-timbering (also called false half-timbering), a feature commonly found in later Tudor Revival architecture.

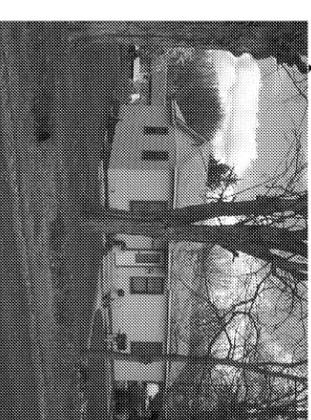
#### Stop 6:



#### 11139 W. Frost Street

This is another good example of a vernacular farmhouse, built circa 1895. It has a canted bay front elevation. Two additions at the rear of the house may date from 1920-1940.

#### Stop 8:



#### 11396 W. First Street

The house is a vernacular L-shaped cottage typical of the modest house styles of the 1940s. The interesting garage has walls constructed of stone rubble masonry. It has hinged doors and a gabled roof covered with wood shingles.

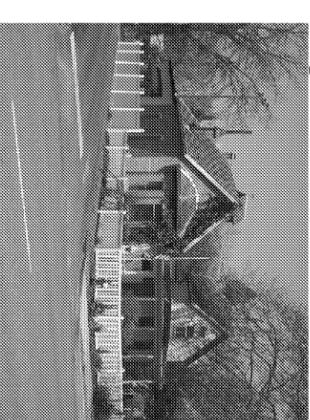
#### Stop 10:



#### 11223 W. State Street

Built in 1890, this two-story house has brick walls and a stone masonry foundation. It has historic double-hung, sash windows, and segmental brick arches accent the window openings. Although altered, the front porch is supported by original square posts.

#### Stop 11:



#### 11070 W State Street

Doctor O. W. Hall of Star had the brick portion of this two-story dwelling constructed for his family in 1892, using the ground floor as his office and drug store. The eastern addition occurred around 1905. The brick façade has a bay window with segmental arches for lintels. The hipped-roof porch is supported with decorative wood posts. While it is one of the older and more interesting historic structures in Star, due to exterior modifications to the structure, it is deemed not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The dwelling was designated as a County Treasure for the month of February, 2005.

Dr. Hall played a vital role in Star's development. His deep concern for the welfare of the citizen's of Star is evidenced by the fact that he would take seriously ill patients into his home so that he could care for them day and night.

