

could be used when early primary sources were no longer available to researchers. It was also featured in the Near-by History Series, *Places of Worship*, by James Wind. In addition, it was recognized by the Eli Lilly Foundation as the only church history book that portrayed the influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Church, South on a developing community.

In researching the book, Hill went back to the original 1880s homestead records and newspaper articles.

Hill is one of the co-founders the Meridian Historical Society. The Society maintains and operates the Meridian History Center inside City Hall. The Center is staffed solely by volunteers and contains archived documents and photographs as well as exhibits relating to Meridian's history.



Lila Hill Accolades

Here is a small sampling of the awards and recognition Lila has received for her work and volunteerism.

- Recognized in 2012 by the American Association of State and Local Historians with an “Award of Merit” for tireless dedication to documenting and preserving her community history
- Meridian Woman of the Year in 1992
- Ministry of Memory Award given by the United Methodist Historical Society at its annual meeting in 2013
- Preservation of Idaho Orchid Award
- Meridian City Volunteer of the Year



ADA COUNTY MAKING HISTORY AWARD

The Ada County Making History Award honors people whose activities today are creating our future history. Ada County is pleased to present its Making History Award to Lila Hill volunteer at the Meridian History Center and author of two books about Meridian-area history: *They Came to Build a Community* and *Before the Times*.



Lila Hill

The Ada County Board of County Commissioners is pleased to present its Making History Award to Lila Hill for her contributions in preserving and sharing Meridian's history for future generations.

Personal Life

Lila Hill was born and raised in the small rural farming community of Monte Vista, Colorado, with a brother and two sisters. She grew up on a farm and attended Sargent Consolidated Schools. Her parents volunteered in their nondenominational community church and community in many capacities. “A community is only as good as you make it,” she recalls her father saying.

With her ex-husband Kent Kehler, Hill moved to Boise in 1952. They first went to Moses Lake, Washington. However, the jobs there were already filled, so they returned to Boise where she had an aunt and uncle living.

Hill moved to Meridian in 1954, which at the time was a small farming community of 2,000 to 3,000. It had a small-town feel that was similar to where she grew up in Colorado.

Hill met her current husband, Earl Hill, at church. Earl’s father migrated to Idaho in 1888 from Missouri. His parents married in 1912, with his mother being an old-maid schoolteacher in her 30s and his father being almost 50. The family homesteaded, starting with sheep and then switching to dairy and feed crops. Earl is the sixth child in a family of seven—two girls and five boys. His father died when he was 14, so he moved to Meridian with his mother, where he graduated from high school and attended Boise Junior College for two years before returning to the farm.

Earl and Lila will have been married for 49 years this year. Hill says she is fortunate to have a husband who let her pursue her own interests while he stayed home and milked the cows.



Photo: A rag rug weaving loom ca. 1918. Donated by Earl and Lila Hill

She has three sons along with Earl’s son and daughter as well as several grandchildren.

The church has continued to play a major role in Hill’s life. She sang in the choir, served as organist, and gave piano lessons for 50 years, as well as serving the local church in all capacities except trustee.

In addition to the Meridian Historical Society, Hill has belonged to many organizations, including being a member of Eastern Star for more than 60 years, Daughters of the American Revolution for more than 40 years, Colonial Dames of the Seventeenth Century, and the Idaho Huguenot Society.

Meridian History

Meridian was platted in 1893 and incorporated in 1903. It is a city founded primarily on agriculture.

It was particularly known for its dairy farmers in the area. At one point, more than 3,000 farmers sent their milk to the Meridian Creamery, located downtown at the site where the Meridian City Hall is located.



Knowing Meridian as she did, what’s been Hill’s biggest surprise about the city now? The biggest surprise has been the growth of Meridian, she says. She attributes its success to good leadership and the thrifty disposition of its citizens.

Hill Documents Meridian’s History

Until the *Valley Times* newspaper folded in early 2017, Hill volunteered her time to write a Meridian-area history column. Her column lasted more than 26 years.

Hill is also the author of two books about Meridian-area history: *They Came to Build a Community*, and *Before the Times*. *They Came to Build a Community*, published in 1986, was co-written by Dr. Glen Davidson and intended to help Meridian United Methodist observe its centennial. It was about how the local Methodist Church influenced the development of the Meridian community.

The book was selected by the American Association of State and Local Historians as an example of what