



## Harris Ranch Oral Histories Summary

Interviewees: Felicia Burkhalter, Millie Davis, Larry Eno, Alta Harris and Ron Murray

Interviewer: Ellen Southard, Belt Collins

Dates Conducted: April 10 – 12, 2006

The Harris Ranch Oral Histories were conducted in April 2006 in conjunction with the Harris Ranch Charrette. The purpose of the oral histories was to provide interpretive data in support of the design team and to provide a lasting archive of the Harris family story. Participants included Felicia Burkhalter and Millie Davis, daughters of Dallas & Alta Harris; Alta Harris herself; along with Larry Eno a ranch hand who has spent 62 years working for the Harris family, and Ron Murray a 30 year employee of the ranch.

The oral histories revolved mostly around accounts of the Harris family's journey to the State of Idaho from Oklahoma and the evolution of the family business in lumber and ranching. All of the interviewees discussed the role Dallas Harris played in the Boise community, the rise and fall of the lumber industry in Idaho and his significant contributions to horse breeding. Other than the Harris family themselves, there was little discussion of historically significant individuals with the exception of Chief Big Jim of the Shoshone-Bannock tribe and Mr. Kelly who owned Kelly's Hot Springs. Both of these individuals were associated with the Warm Springs Gulch area of the ranch.

During the interviews we toured the ranch properties extensively looking at specific centers of former development including the Barberton Dam Site fondly known as "Felicia's Ruins"; the Warm Springs Gulch once home to Kelly's Hot Springs and wintering grounds for the Shoshone-Bannock tribe; the Homestead site where the Harris sisters currently reside, the Harris Brother's Mill and the "Old Barn Meadow". We found that there was little concentration of historic structures on the sites.

The remaining buildings of significance would include:

- "Felicia's Ruins" which are part of the Barber Dam site and a National Trust Landmark
- the remaining worker's cottage from the Barberton Mill housing which is not land marked and is currently not situated at its original location
- the Barn, which is not land marked, but could be deconstructed and relocated
- the ranch hand's house and 3 low rise silos
- the original Harris home currently occupied by Felicia
- the remaining foundation of Kelly's Hot Spring's

Seattle  
Australia  
Guam  
Hong Kong  
Honolulu  
Malaysia  
Philippines  
Singapore  
Thailand

From these interviews we learned of the rich history of the Harris Ranch site and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Harris Family. The place itself has played a significant role in the economic development of Boise. Particularly the Barberton Mill, Barberton Dam and Harris Brothers Mill. Currently there are extensive collections of photography and business records available through the Idaho State Historical Society (Barberton Vertical files and Boise Payette Manuscripts). However, there is no collection currently available for the Harris Family and the “working” ranch properties.

Recommendations:

- create an archive of the Harris Family photos, mementos and oral histories with their associated photography for the Idaho Historical Society
- incorporate Harris Family history in interpretive education and signage throughout the ranch’s development i.e. community centers, parks, etc.
- preserve the original Harris home, Ranch Hand’s house, silos and horse barn
- move and reconstruct the “old” barn at the Homestead site
- move and renovate the Barberton Mill cottage to the Homestead Site
- preserve the remaining ruins at the Barberton Dam site as a historic place, acquire the National Trust plaque for signage
- landmark the Kelly’s Hot Spring foundation up Warm Springs Gulch

These recommendations support the master plan prepared by Belt Collins and Lenir Limited. To the best of my knowledge they meet the requirements of the City of Boise and the State of Idaho historic treatment regulations.

Signed:  
Belt Collins Northwest LLC



Ellen Southard  
Principal

