

Potlatch Corp. donates land to Avery for center

By SANDY BENSON
PHONE: 245-4186

AVERY — Potlatch Forest, Inc., has given the land on which the Community Center is located to Avery. The gift also included the fishpond park area. Don Green, representing Potlatch, with its continued interest in the welfare of the community, presented the gift deed to Eugene Rasmusson, president of the Avery Citizens Committee, in a brief ceremony near the fishpond, Aug. 31. 82

The occasion was of special interest to Harold Theriault, longtime Avery resident. Theriault remembers that when he was a boy, the depot, which is part of the center now, was temporarily housed in a building at the roundhouse on the west end of town. The Milwaukee, St. Paul and Puget Sound Railroad had its own construction company at Sparta, Wisc., he said. Depots and other frame buildings to be placed along the railroad line were constructed in Sparta, knocked down and shipped to be re-constructed by building crews. In 1909 the depot building arrived in Avery and was erected by M. Johnston and crew. The depot served as headquarters for the Milwaukee Road in Avery for the next 60-odd years.

→ In April of 1977 the Milwaukee Road sold the depot building to the community for one dollar. The event was the culmination of efforts of citizens, spearheaded by the Milwaukee Women's Club. With dreams of a civic center realized, citizens rolled up their sleeves and under the leadership of several individuals, including Ruth Lindow, Dave Asleson, Joyce Long and Eugene Rasmusson, began a renovation project lasting several years.

Hundreds of dollars were needed to renovate the building and to install a six foot chain link fence along the Milwaukee's main line track.

To raise the necessary funds there were community dinners, bake sales and bazaars for cash donations. Former Avery residents, learning of the project, contributed several thousand dollars. The Milwaukee Women's Club donated dishes, silverware, utensils, a range, refrigerator, card tables and banquet tables.

The civic center is used for the majority of community meetings and social affairs such as dances, potlucks, Vacation Bible School, card games and political forums.

This summer the old express office was converted into the Avery Post Office on the northeast end of the building. The agent and telegrapher's office is now the public library. The old waiting room is a museum which has been dedicated to Dave Asleson for his leadership. The building also contains a main hall, kitchen and storeroom which formerly served as the Beanery. The baggage room currently houses the Quick Response Unit.

The building is being considered for inclusion on the Register of Historic Places by the Idaho State Historical Society.

Trees, shrubs and flowers have been planted in the fishpond area, and the fishpond continues to be a popular stopping place for visitors and recreationalists traveling up the St. Joe.

A historical sign and map-board were added in 1981 to the park area, explaining the history of the community and the 1910 fire.

Next year is the Diamond Jubilee of Avery, and the Community Center promises to be the focus of attention at the celebration.

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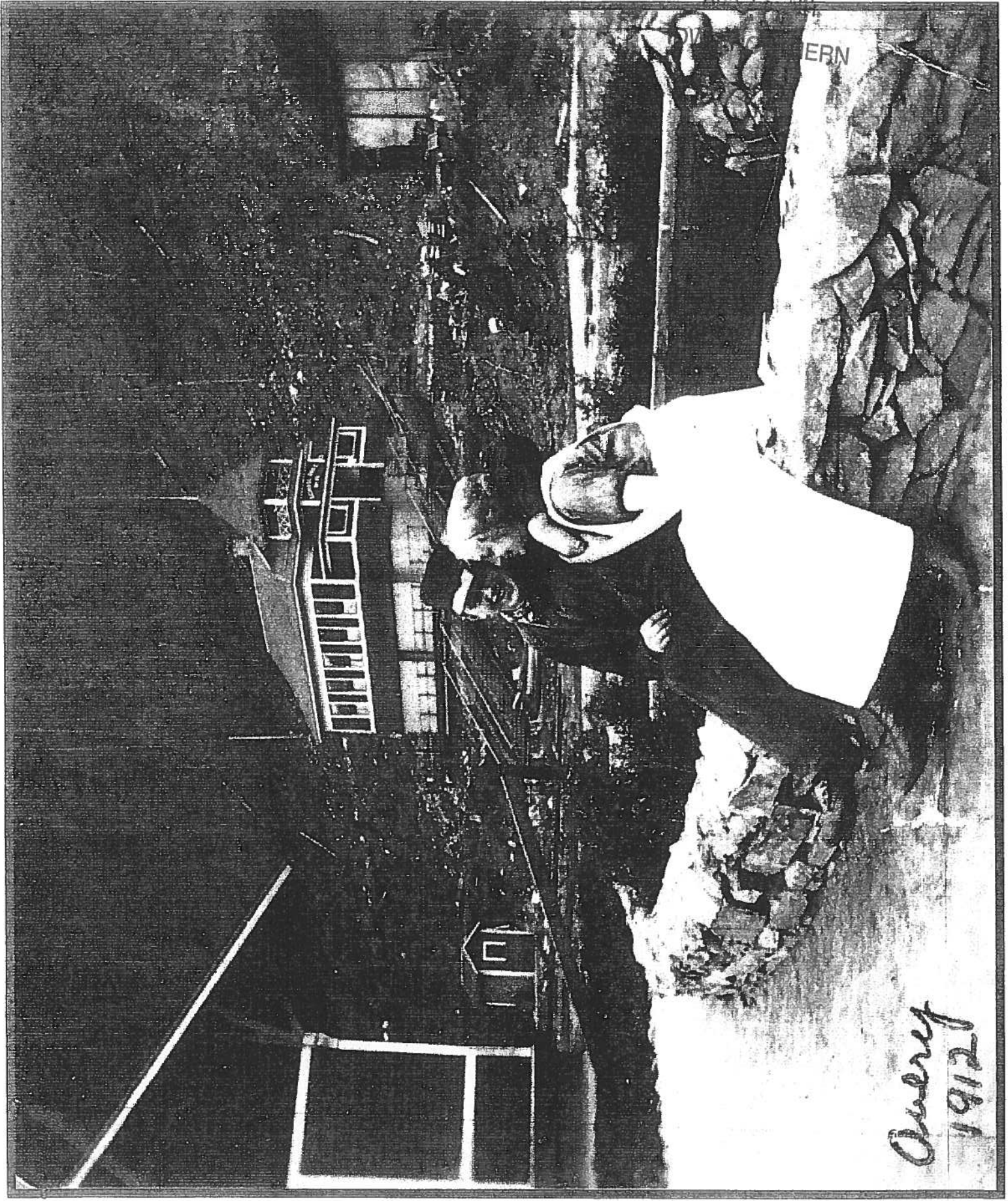
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