200 N Eastern Avenue

Following the death of her husband, Rebecca Brown Mitchell was left with nothing save her Bible and hymnal, because the state of Illinois did not allow women to hold property in their own names. All of her assets, including items that she had brought to the marriage in the form of her dowry, were seized by the state and she found herself forced to buy back her possessions. Fueled by this experience, she took it upon herself to receive her degree and become a teacher. She remarried, but was not happy, so left her husband and took the train as far west as she was able, eventually making her way to Eagle Rock. She arrived on June 5, 1882. Sunday, June 11, 1882, she founded the first Sunday school in the town. The following day, June 12, she began to teach public school. She was also active in the Women’s Temperance Union, where she served as the state superintendent of legislation. She became a force in lobbying the Idaho legislature for women’s voting rights. She would have people stand outside voting booths impressing upon voters the need to grant women suffrage. These rights would be granted in 1896, 24 years before the 19th Amendment would be ratified. She was also chaplain of the Idaho House of Representative from 1896-1899 and involved in the Village Improvement Society, where she was a crucial force in earning the $15,000 grant to build the Carnegie Library. This library is now a part of the Museum of Idaho. The building was saved from demolition by the Bonneville County Historical Society. The building is now home to the Museum of Idaho.

Rebecca Mitchell’s Memoir
Images courtesy of the Museum of Idaho

For more information, contact the Museum of Idaho.
101 North Placer

Here at 101 North Placer Avenue, Dr. Fuller established the Fuller and Soderquist Hospital in his home in the early 1900’s. Later, at the same location, Dr. H.D. Spencer established the Spencer Hospital in 1917. The wives of both doctors noted difficulties in entertaining, as they had to lead guests through the second floor surgery area to the third floor guest area. Anna Spencer, the wife of Dr. Spencer, was a violinist and held concerts on the third floor. She was also well known for her parties. Anyone who was anyone in town was invited to her house for an annual garden party. Anna had planted tens of lilac bushes around the property and would invite her guests simply by sending a card saying “the lilacs are blooming.” For some time, Mrs. Spencer would hire a local boy to deliver her invitations. One time, the boy she hired took the money and did not deliver the invitations. It caused quite a stir as women all over town began to fret when their invitation did not arrive, fearing that they had done something to irritate Mrs. Spencer. Needless to say, Anna Spencer did not use a child to deliver her invitations any more. Rather, she used the telephone.

798 South Boulevard

In 1921, Dr. H.D. Spencer moved his hospital from the original location on Placer to this location at 798 South Boulevard. Dr. Spencer trained many nurses at this hospital, including Anna Lee Bridges. Ms. Bridges was the daughter of a doctor, and had her first experience nursing during the Spanish influenza pandemic at the Placer facility. She later received more formal training through the hospital. During this time in Idaho Falls, there were a number of prostitutes, who lived above many downtown buildings. Anna often cared for these women, and was questioned as to why. Her response was always that although these women had bad public reputations, a person would be more surprised by some of the stories that they could hear of the town’s more reputable citizens. She never did divulge those secrets.

288 Maple Street

288 Maple Street was home to S. Kate Baker Curley and Bowen Curley, members of the town’s elite society. Bowen served as the President of the American National Bank for two, two-year terms. Kate was the president of the Village Improvement Society, a group of women dedicated to the town’s upkeep. She was responsible for reorganizing the VIS to promote “public convenience and health and render the town more desirable as a place of residence.” Under her guidance, these women began a legacy that saw the naming of streets and numbering of houses for efficient mail delivery, the creation of a public library, the literal and figurative “clean up” of the city, and the maintenance of a hospital and a cemetery. As part of her mission, Kate helped create parks around the town. She brought seedlings of hardwood trees from Iowa to plant. Although planting these trees took a lot of work, due to the basalt rock in the city, she worked tirelessly and is responsible for many of the trees still on the numbered streets and in the city parks. Not only did this effort beautify the city, it also provided for environmental stabilization by curbing the horrible sand storms that used to be commonplace in Idaho Falls. Kate died in 1903 of cancer at only 53 years old. In her honor, the women of the V.I.S. named Kate Curley Park after her when it was completed that same year.

Fun Facts

Frank and Fred Keefer were the first twins born in Idaho Falls, in 1891. Fred would build the cabin on Keefer’s Island in the Snake River. Frank was a snake handler with Siebrand Brothers Carnival.

Beneath Downtown Idaho Falls lie a nest of tunnels, the entrances now sealed. The exact use of these tunnels unknown; it could have been opium trade, prostitution, or to keep the Chinese workers of the streets.

Matt Taylor built Taylor’s Bridge, a toll bridge over a narrow part of the Snake. The first bridge was washed away by spring run off, but he built a new, and stronger, replacement. This bridge would lead to the founding of Eagle Rock, which would be later renamed Idaho Falls.