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Becoming Basque: Ethnic Heritage on Boise's Grove Street

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Becoming BASQUE



Glenn Oakley

Ethnic Heritage on Boise's Grove Street

Investigate Boise Community Research Series
Boise State University

Becoming Basque

Ethnic Heritage on Boise's Grove Street





Single men, mostly young and impoverished, led the Basque migration from Bizkaia in northern Spain to Idaho's Boise Basin. Families followed. Pictured: child of Mrs. A. Uranga, Boise, 1918.

Becoming Basque

- ethnic heritage on
Boise's Grove Street

Investigate Boise Community Research Series
Boise State University

With support from the Boise State University Basque Studies
Program and the Basque Museum & Cultural Center

2014

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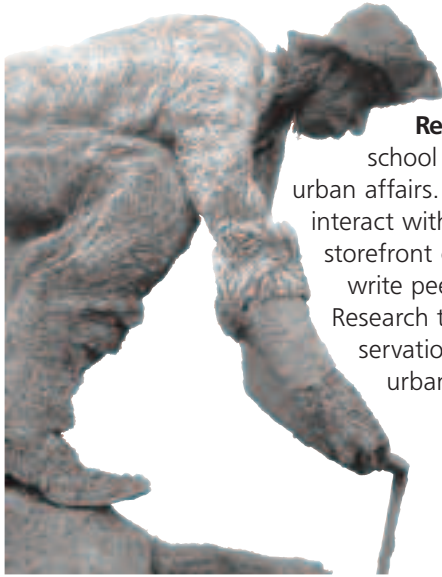
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The Investigate Boise Community Research Series is a nine-credit field school for the study of municipal civics and urban affairs. Each summer, about 40 students interact with practitioners and public officials in a storefront classroom downtown. Top students write peer-reviewed essays for publication. Research topics include history, commerce, conservation, transportation, social welfare and urban renewal.

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Grove and Idaho streets boarded most of the Basques in Boise at the close of the First World War. Pictured: child of Mitchell Gabica, Boise, 1918.

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Introduction

Poplars and cottonwoods arched over the four-foot canal on the street that gave Boise its nickname, the City of Trees. Grove Street, later planted in elms, once paralleled the Oregon Short Line. In the Gilded Age of the Gothic Revival, when the world came to Boise to invest in the Idaho gold rush, Grove Street was the city's most fashionable address. Water wheels fed flumes and irrigation ditches. Grand villas with gingerbread millwork flanked an opulent French chateau. The chateau, called the DeLamar, was later cut into rooms and remodeled into a Basque hotel. A link in the Basque migration from Bizkaia in northern Spain to the shadows of the northern Rockies, the DeLamar fronted a Chinese-Basque immigrant district. Before 1972, when the DeLamar fell to urban renewal, Grove Street



Idaho State Historical Society

Basque shepherders winter in Boise, about 1910.

with its boarding houses was a cultural treasure as joyously rich as any in Boise.

Today, the street that gave Boise its nickname represents the past and uncertain future of downtown's urban renewal. The Grove Hotel now marks the grave of the two-story Hop Sing Building where a Chinese tong from Canton once ran a cultural center. In 1972, in defense of Boise's redevelopment agency, the Idaho Supreme Court upheld the ruling that the Hop Sing was "a serious menace" and "injurious to the public health." Ethnic stakeholders on Grove still fear the wreckage of urban renewal to the west, near

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the entrance to Grove, is a brewing dispute over a phalanx of bus ramps for an underground transit center. Neighbors foresee a traffic nightmare. To the east in the grey-field of surface parking the concern is that glassy construction might dwarf Grove Street's pedestrian scale. If the damage can be mitigated, if the city can work to preserve a walkable streetscape, a treasure unique to Boise can still tell meaningful tales.

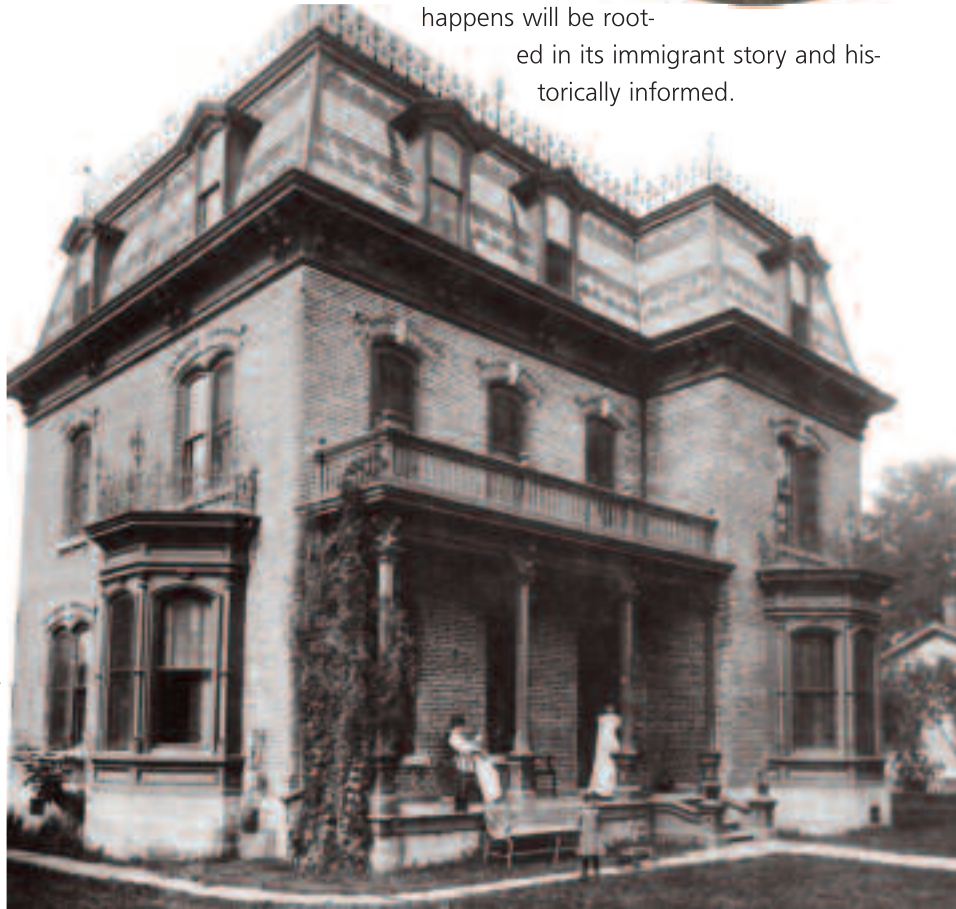
We dedicate this book to the hope that whatever

happens will be root-

ed in its immigrant story and historically informed.



Basque Museum & Cultural Center



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Plans for an Eighth Street transit complex place bus ramps and an office building within 50 feet of Grove Street's cultural district. Opposite: the DeLamar, a Basque hotel from 1912 to 1972; Hinkey token, Anduiza Boarding House, 619 Grove Street.

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Mike Edminster



Brick warehouses became restaurants and a distillery on the north side of Grove Street. In 2001, the Basque Block won top Idaho honors for historic preservation.

The Basque identity at the heart of our story was not always so mainstream quintessential. "Filthy, treacherous and meddlesome" was how the *Caldwell Tribune*, in 1909, disparaged the valley's immigrant Basques. "These Bascos," the paper continued, were no less foreign and clannish than straw-hatted Chinese. Boise-based fear of the Basques fueled Protestant nativism in

the WWI-era campaign to shut off immigration. Poor, dark-haired and Roman Catholic, the Basques seemed a cultural threat. Some Basques responded by booking passage back to their homeland along the French-Spanish border. Others sought ethnic assimilation—speaking English, playing American sports, aping the dominate culture. Few of those Boise Basques from the first generation could have foreseen the rise from sheep camps to white collar status as teachers, entrepreneurs and politicians, even secretary of state.

It took that process of assimilation about three generations for the children of the immigrant children to pridefully value old world traditions and strive to reclaim what was lost. “Grandchildren fight to remember what their parents wanted to forget,” said the sociologist Marcus Lee Hansen in words that capture the theme of our book. Several of our fourteen contributors are Basque from that third generation. Most are university students working with professional mentors. Their narrative essays, herein, are the fifth in a Boise State University series of community research reports. Collectively they seek to explain how the Basqueness on Grove Street became as genuinely basic to Boise as Bogus Basin or business suits with cowboy boots on Republicans in the Idaho Statehouse. A study of cultural persistence—of heritage and assimilation, of politics, music, food, sports, language, dance, religion and landmarks—*Becoming Basque* is also a book about becoming a Boise Idahoan on a street that connects who we were to the ethnic mosaic we are.

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Steve Bly



Basque herder tends sheep near Hailey, Idaho.



Trails to
IDAHO

by John Bieter with Dennis O'Dell

I come to Boise on 26 December 1958. In Basque Country and Spain no one had much work, and when I had a chance to tend sheep on a contract, I decide to come," said the now 73-year-old Jose Luis Arrieta. This was the beginning of a 53-year career for Jose Luis in Idaho's sheep industry. But this new beginning came with a price. "It was not easy to leave my family. My family is still in the Old Country. My mother and father passed away, but I still got one brother over there and I have one brother here in Mountain Home."

Jose Luis got the job through family connections, a common method of shepherd recruitment during the 20th century. "Somebody tells the boss, 'I want to bring over my cousin or my brother.' That is how most of us get shepherd jobs in Boise." Jose Luis' arrival reunited him with part of his family. "My mother's first cousin was working in Boise. She wanted to know what the family was doing, all the information. After staying for three days, we went to work in Notus."

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BoisebyBurns.com



Basque herder with dogs and wagon, Idaho, about 1925. Opposite: sheepherder Jose Luis Arrieta, an immigrant to Boise in 1958; iron spring-handled sheep shears, 1980.

Jose Luis heard stories about shepherding in the United States from older generations of herders. However, unlike earlier Basques who came by boat, the 18-year-old flew with 11 other young Basque men and enjoyed the network of those who had come before. "We come into Boise and somebody was at the airport waiting for you," he remembered. "Most of us got good friends that already worked for the outfit we were going to." Jose Luis came over on a contract designed to alleviate the shortage of shepherders needed in Idaho. Contracts between the individual Basques and the sheep companies allowed them to travel and work in the United States, but only for a fixed period. Jose Luis explained: "We came over here by a sheep company's three-year contract, but at the end of the three years we had to go



Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Library of Congress

back. We came over legal with full passport, visa and everything. With contract we were here legal—nothing illegal.”

Jose Luis made three trips between the Basque Country and America within an 11-year period. “The first trip, I made it for three years and eight months because of an extension. At that time ... the contract was like you come in

January, which is lambing time. You need more people then, and when spring come in you need more people and then in August you need more people for lamb shipping. After that you send

them back to the Old Country.” This process continued until he obtained his green card in 1971.

Contracts were only given to each sheep man based on his job performance and his desire to return. Jose Luis explained the informal ground rules for a contract renewal. “You do a good job and the boss likes you, he bring you back on a new contract. Some people no good, no like the sheep and the owner no bring them back. Somebody who gonna work more with the sheep, the company gonna bring you back.” The contract guaranteed employment, food and lodging, but “even with contract, we have to pay transportation,” Jose Luis remembered. “Now the company pays for the tickets, but then we have to pay both come and go.” Other expenses not covered under contract included clothing, boots, winter coats and bedding.

Jose Luis didn’t mind the long hours and isolation that came with herding sheep. “You were a very young guy; work here no bother me at all, but working over there [in the Basque Country] was hard work, like mining and everything else over there. But working here, keeping sheep, rolling hay and all the other chores, was nothing for me; I started working over there at 15

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Mike Edminster



Sheep boss John Faulkner, left, with his Basque foreman, Julian Larrabeiti, near Gooding, Idaho, 2005.

years old mining, working with marble rock in the mines." The work here wasn't as stressful as leaving home itself. "Leaving mother over there, that was hard. I come over here at 18 years old and away from home and I have to start cleaning my own clothes. I never cleaned my clothes in Spain; my mother do all that for me and when I started cleaning my own clothes here, then I remembered my mother and that was hard."

He started on the ground floor, cleaning the corrals, clearing weeds and putting canvas covers on the lambing sheds. "Sheep was out yet; we just fixed up the camp getting ready for lambing," he said. Jose Luis described his first experience working with sheep. "We had two guys in camp at this sheep company, one camp tender and a herder. I never tended



Library of Congress

Echeverria and Mendiola families pause for a photograph at their desert sheep ranch, about 1979.

camp. The first year they put me into herding and that was it, straight into sheep herding," he said. "Usually, the young guy was camp tender and the older guy was the herder. I was put in as herder and had a 65-year-old man as the camp tender, a nice man. He told me what to do, tended the camp and helped herd the sheep," recalled Jose Luis. "We were together for about two years. Then he retired and went back to the Old Country and I just kept going. I worked for six years herding sheep." In April 1965, Jose Luis became the foreman. "I no want it, but the bosses said this and said that, so I started being foreman. I was foreman for 44 years." During a 1971 trip to the Basque County, Jose Luis married the love of his life—his wife Josune, who he had met in Boise when she came to visit relatives. "I marry over there, a Basque girl. I didn't marry young; when I marry I was about 32 years old. I brought her back later and she is still here." Jose Luis and Josune have a

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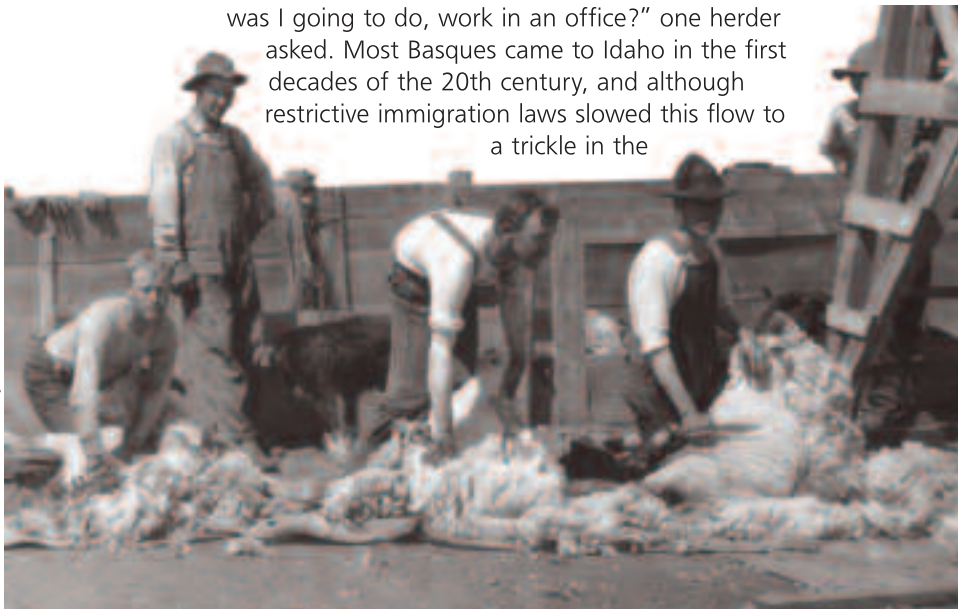
married son and grandchildren. They are doing what they can to ensure that their grandchildren master the Basque language, Jose Luis said.

The life of a Basque shepherd is generally defined as a lonely one with multiple hardships. But sheep camp life for Jose Luis was more positive than negative. “Sheep camp food—good food! Lots of food, oh yea. We got plenty of meat and food like ham, bacon, eggs, green beans, garbanzo beans, everything. All kinds of food.”

Jose Luis represents the last generation of Basque immigrant sheepherders in Idaho. Beginning about the time of statehood in 1890, Basques found opportunities through herding sheep, a job few others sought. In Australia, Basque immigrants became known for their work as sugar cane cutters, but in Idaho and the American West, Basques became synonymous with the sheep industry. This way of life established the parameters of settlement for Basque communities in Idaho and throughout the West. Boarding houses sprang up to meet the temporary lodging needs of these itinerant workers and provided Basque women opportunities for work. Basques celebrated festivals like the Shepherders’ Ball in Boise and other communities during the winter months of the lambing season when herders came out of the hills and enjoyed themselves in town.

Although few had any experience in herding, their agrarian background and work ethic prepared them well. With little education and no knowledge of English, few other possibilities remained. “What the hell else was I going to do, work in an office?” one herder asked. Most Basques came to Idaho in the first decades of the 20th century, and although restrictive immigration laws slowed this flow to a trickle in the

Idaho State Historical Society



1920s—and later an improved Basque economy made leaving home unnecessary—that trickle remained steady until the 1970s. The sheer number of Basques made them noticeable in sparsely populated Idaho. Although there might have been more Basques in California or Argentina, few areas had such a high concentration.

The migration into Idaho represented only the most recent involvement of Basques in America. From working on Columbus' crew to the exploration and settlement of the New World, Basques involved themselves throughout the Americas. By the 19th century, they controlled much of the sheep sector in Argentina; the migration into the American West during the 1849 California Gold Rush represented a secondary movement. While few Basques succeeded in gold mining, many decided to stay, working in the livestock industry to feed the growing population.

By the middle of the 19th century, almost every small town in the Basque Country had at least one success story in the Americas, where possibilities for wealth seemed limitless if one were willing to invest several years of hard work—and hard work was already a fact of life in the future of a young Basque in the Old World anyway. Only one member inherited the family farm, which forced the others to make a life elsewhere. In the United States, thousands of miles of barely trod upon grazing land meant sheepmen expanded beyond California, over the Sierras into Nevada, where the range spread northward, hastened by the completion of the transcontinental railroad. By the late 1880s, Antonio Azcuenaga and Jose Navarro struggled over the desert of northern Nevada to Jordan Valley, Oregon. In summer 1889, Azcuenaga guided his sheep up the Owyhee Mountains, crossing into what was still the Territory of Idaho. "Thus," one author wrote, "it can be rightfully said that the Basques followed the sheep into Idaho."

Basques looked at shepherding in Idaho as a good opportunity to make money and return to the Basque Country as quickly—and as wealthy—



Allan Ansell

Brickwork at the restored Jacobs-Uberuaga House, the oldest brick structure in Boise. Opposite: a sheep "blading crew" near Hagerman, about 1910.

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as possible. However, young Basque men were involved in an industry that was hardly glorified by American society. One author noted that one could not fire a shotgun into a crowd in the West without hitting somebody who had herded sheep, "but it would probably take the charge in the other barrel to make him admit it." Furthermore, Basque immigrants challenged the dominant WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) cultural model, thus earning monikers like "dirty black Basco" while regularly fighting for acceptance.

To add to their difficulties, most Basque immigrants had no sheepherding experience. If they had herded sheep at all, it was with small bands providing cheese and wool for the family, with none of the loneliness, financial responsibility or dangers that came with large-scale herding in Idaho. These inexperienced herders had to learn quickly, often within days of arriving in Idaho, the system of herding up to 2,500 head of sheep. They had to grow accustomed to the bloody, messy process of the lambing season from January to mid-March, when they helped deliver thousands of lambs and form bands. They learned to shear the sheep in March and April and move them to the foothills to feed on the spring grasses in May. During the summer, herders drove the bands up mountains, following the retreating line of snow, steering them from one meadow to another, descending only once to ship the lambs in July. They trailed down to the valleys before the first snowfall in October and corralled the sheep by December. Sheep men then began to prepare for the birth of the first lambs, and the process started again.

They learned, however, that often the hardest challenges of sheepherding were not physical, but mental and emotional. The worst part of herding for most was the loneliness and isolation. "I remember when I got the first letter from my mother," one Basque herder said. "I had to go behind the tree to read it because I was crying like a baby." Their homesickness and longing for companionship became more acute during holidays. One herder wrote home, "Make sure to buy good fish and wine because Christmas ... is for people to enjoy ... at least, for those who can. I'm planning on spending it with the sheep." In extreme cases, the isolation created an "occupational hazard"—insanity. The herders called it being "sheeped" or "sagebrushed." Later, when Basques in Boise formed a health insurance organization, part of its coverage included return passage to the Basque Country for any member who suffered from mental illness.

Experiences like these gave Basques who braved the barriers of America and succeeded a new, bigger world. "(Sheepherding) makes you self-sufficient," a Basque immigrant said. "You learn to survive no matter what. Even if a snake bites you, you say, 'I gotta make it on my own.' You know that nobody else is going to help you. Your mother is not going to be



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Basque-style chorizo pork sausages fry in a sheepherder's skillet, Nevada, 1978.

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kissing you.” Some went back to the Basque Country and made a better life for themselves after saving for a number of years. However, for many who dreamed in the hills of Idaho about going back to the Basque Country, something unexpected happened when they returned to their homeland.

Basque Museum & Cultural Center



They realized they had changed and that their home and future was in America now. Success stories such as Juan Achabal (who Americanized his name to John Archabal) fueled the imagination for future Basque immigrants to Idaho. Archabal survived a shipwreck during his passage to America, ran one of the largest sheep operations in the nation and by the 1920s was one of the wealthiest men in Idaho.

Basque migration took place within a broader national and international societal context that often

severely impacted immigration. For example, legislation setting immigration quotas in 1924 ended open entrance into the United States and drastically reduced numbers. Consequently, some Basques “jumped ship,” worked illegally and paid the consequences. One former herder remembered his boss telling him, “I pay legal guys \$225 [a month], but for you guys that are not legal, \$175 ... Hey, you don’t got your papers, if you don’t like it ... ” “So he paid me \$175 a month for the year of work,” the herder recalled. “As if my sheep knew I didn’t have papers.”

Besides immigration legislation, events like the Great Depression and passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934 spelled the end for some Basques already here and for those coming. The Depression created especially economically challenging times for Basque sheep men, while the grazing legislation closed the American West to open-range itinerant herding. Basque herders could no longer trail their sheep on open range and instead had to purchase land and negotiate grazing permits, which meant a far greater



Mike Edminster

Idaho herders still use a long-handled crook to snag ewes ready for lambing. Pictured: Faulkner Ranch, 2005. Opposite: Augustin Uriarte at sheep camp, about 1950.

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The Modern Hotel at 613 Idaho Street fell victim to urban renewal on the lot that is now City Hall. Pictured: birthday party at the Modern, 1931.

investment and a more complicated process if they wanted to continue working with sheep.

Many took jobs elsewhere. Of 119 Basque immigrants interviewed in the 1940s, 75 percent first worked as shepherders in Idaho. But one-third left the industry after two years and by the mid-1940s, only one-fourth remained in the sheep business. Many sought positions that kept them closer to town and allowed them to start families. In the 1920s, for example, many Basque men took jobs east of Boise at the Boise-Payette Lumber Company's (later, Boise-Cascade Corporation) mill in Barber. Later, when the mill relocated to Emmett, most of the Basque families moved along with it.

Shepherding, though, remained the occupation that brought most Basques here initially. The industry demanded labor. In 1910, sheep numbers in Idaho totaled slightly more than 3 million head, and that number grew until it peaked just after World War I. Basques commanded much respect in



Sheep foreman Jose Luis Arrieta became a champion weightlifter. His image is iconographic on Capitol Boulevard's heritage mural.

the industry, demonstrated most prominently by a series of laws enacted to help Basques sidestep immigration quotas. By the 1940s, there was a severe labor shortage in the sheep industry, partially caused by the influx of workers into the war effort. Desperate to retain reliable Basque employees, Western sheep owners pleaded with their government representatives to help grant residency to Basques who had entered the country illegally. The movement led to a series of "Shepherd Laws" that granted residency to hundreds of Basque men in the American West and paved the way for the legal entry of hundreds more in the next decades.

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Mike Edminster



Memory and tradition still guide the Trailing of the Sheep Festival in Ketchum and Hailey. Pictured: Festival sheep wagons near Hailey, 2005.

Following the efforts of other Western members of Congress, Idaho Sen. Henry Dworshak in 1947 wrote a letter to an immigration official requesting that a group of Basque shepherders be allowed to stay in the country since they were “well qualified and exceptional” workers. In the late 1950s, Sen. Frank Church also requested the Judiciary Committee to consider a bill to help 13 Basques achieve citizenship. “In Idaho,” he wrote the committee chairman, “we do not look at immigrant Basques as foreigners but as Idahoans. They have contributed much to Idaho’s culture, its economy and its history.”

Jose Luis Arrieta provides an example of those later herders who benefited from this legislation. When he entered Idaho, a Basque-American com-

munity was already flourishing from the efforts of earlier generations. Newcomers like Jose Luis, who continued to work in sheepherding, represented a minority: less than five percent of second-generation Basques stayed in sheepherding. Instead, Basques worked in almost every occupation in the state: lawyers, bankers, stenographers, beauticians, teachers, butchers or salespeople. In 1967, one of their own, Pete Cenarrusa, became Idaho's secretary of state. Their parents had provided not only an education, but they also had earned a reputation as valued employees, thus improving job opportunities for their children.

By the 1970s, the sheep industry was on a downward trend. Synthetic materials in clothing increasingly replaced wool, and pressure on the land from a growing population made the sheep industry more challenging and less profitable. Reflecting a nationwide slowdown, sheep outfits in Idaho began to shut down. In 1940, almost 1.4 million head of sheep grazed in Idaho; by 1970, there were only 773,000 and by the mid-1990s, fewer than 250,000. Immigrants from Mexico and South America began to replace Basques in the shrinking pool of sheep industry employees. An *Idaho Statesman* headline in the late 1970s reflected the new trend: "Mexicans, Peruvians Supplant Idaho's Sheepherding Basques."

Even though very few Basques are directly tied to the sheep industry today, it remains the strongest identifier of Basques in the West. For good reason—sheepherding provided an opportunity for Basques to make a livelihood in Idaho, and they took advantage of it. From their parents' humble beginnings with the sheep, many in the second generation pursued their education and advanced in society. By the time the third generation and beyond came of age, few worked in the sheep industry, yet the trappings remained. Sheep-themed items stock the shelves of the gift shop in the Basque Museum & Cultural Center and each year the new dancers in the Oinkari troupe make their inaugural performance at the Sheepherders' Ball. "It's one of the first times I've been around sheep," one dancer commented. "But I know how important it's been to our culture. Without sheep, I wouldn't be here doing this."

• • •

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Dennis O'Dell graduated in December 2013 with a bachelor's degree in general studies and a communication minor.

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Cuaderno de retazos



Preserving culture: a silver Caller of Angels shares loving hands with the Basque lauburu. Legend has it that the orb worn as a pendant protects and preserves.

2 Saving EUSKARA

by Kattalina Marie Berriochoa

Carla's ears perk up as the strange words swirl around her. She feels like she is drowning in the sea of an unknown language. Her teacher looks at her and with a smile slows down the sentence to improve understanding. Carla quickly scans her mind to retrieve any clues to the meaning of the words. Even as an adult, she often feels like a child learning the basic building blocks of life and society in her Basque class. Carla's unfamiliarity with the new words has kept her on the edge of fully understanding their meaning. It is that very edge of understanding that drives her to continue learning.

Years later, Carla looks back on those first classes and is amazed by the cache of Basque words she has built, all diligently studied, carefully stored and made accessible with growing ease. Little by little, she is unlocking the nuances of the Basque language, regarded as one of the most complex to learn.

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The seven provinces of the Basque Country are called País Vasco in Spanish, Pays Basque in French and Euskal Herria in Basque. Opposite: the Basque language (*Euskara*) is in capable hands (*eskuetan*).

Learning Basque, like any language, starts with simple vocabulary and continues with refining pronunciation, controlling complex sentences and eventually, incorporating colloquialisms or slang into conversation. Young children and language enthusiasts from all backgrounds have become activists in a growing movement to preserve the Basque language (*Euskara*). Some students come from families with Basque heritage, while others have only seen the North American Basque Association's from the outside. This Basque language renaissance is taking place on a global level, and Boise is playing a title role.

For many, their passion to learn is rooted in the idea that language, regardless of place, is a relevant part of identity. Through speaking the language, they find a deeper connection to the culture. Essentially reinventing what it means to be Basque, word by word these students are encouraging a Basque language revival. Steve Mendive is a history/government teacher who spends his summer breaks in the Basque Country (*Euskadi*) and enjoys

the literary challenge of reading Voltaire's *Candide* in Euskara. He has informally studied the Basque language for many years, first speaking with his family and progressing to advanced language coursework in the Basque Country. For Mendive, learning Basque is personal. "I am an *Euskaldun* (Basque speaker). Before, I was just Basque. There is a big difference."

The Basque language is a minority in its own homeland, where Spanish and French are the lingua franca on each side of the region. "By learning Basque, we show that it has merit," said Mendive. "Many who know it don't speak it often. Many who could learn it, don't." The fact remains that learning Basque is not a necessity for a person living in or visiting the Basque Country. So, how has a language, threatened by extinction, continued to survive and why do people learn Basque, even when they don't have to?

In the 1955 BBC program *Around the World*, Orson Wells famously asked in an episode about the Basque Country, "What is a Basque? All we know for sure is what a Basque is not." Although its origin is unknown, historians consider the Basque community as one of the oldest in Europe. Basques lived in the region between Spain and

France long before the arrival of the Indo-European tribes that formed modern Spanish



eskuetan

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Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com



Celebrating Jaialdi on Grove Street, 2010.

ethnic groups. Spanish became the official language after the eventual conquest by Castilian forces in the Basque Country. Simultaneously, the northern regions of the Basque Country were ceded to France, and French took over as the dominant idiom. The Basque language overlaps three political units: the Basque Autonomous Community (the provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa in Spain), Navarra (in Spain) and the Atlantic Pyrenees (the provinces of Lapurdi, Zuberoa and Behe Nafarroa in France). The standing of Euskara in each area varies significantly, ranging from acceptance in the Autonomous Community to lack of acknowledgement in Navarra and France. But the history and geography of the Basque Country does not necessarily tell the story of its language.

The Euskara Institute at the University of the Basque Country states that "languages exist in the minds of their speakers; they do not have a land of their own. Thus, when locating Euskara on the world's map, we are simply pointing out those areas where Euskara speakers are more likely to be found, that is, where Euskara is most likely to be heard, or where it is most likely to be used as the primary language." Basque, an "island language" originally isolated to the coastal and mountainous region between Spain and France, was transplanted with the initial waves of immigration to countries across the globe.

In the late 19th century, many Basques made the journey to a world unknown in Idaho. The Basque migrants brought with them their food, dance, culture and, of course, language. The majority of the Idaho Basques came from the province of Bizkaia, bringing their own distinct dialect known as *Bizkaieraz*. Throughout the early 1900s, the Basque community in Idaho



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Stone carvers often use Basque-style lettering for gravestones and tombs. Pictured: a funerary stela with Basque lettering.

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KBOI Radio's Espe Alegria was known as "the Voice of the Basques." Opposite: Basque-language radio thrives four decades after Franco. Pictured: Euskara radio tribute in San Sebastian's San Telmo Museum, 2012.

continued to grow and gain social influence. By 1952, there were enough Basque speakers to support a radio show in their native language. *The Basque Program* helped listeners maintain their ethnic and cultural identity. Julian Lachiondo, the first host, turned the show over to Cecil Jayo after a few years. Espe Alegria, "Voice of the Basques," hosted the show for 26 years. She became famous in the Basque County because she spoke in Basque at a time when the language was outlawed under Gen. Francisco Franco's regime in Spain. She famously made an appeal to listeners to raise funds for those in need of medical services

during the Franco era. Alegria was an important linguistic and cultural figure who served as a link for the Basque immigrant population throughout Idaho.

However, with the passing of time, the role of Euskara changed for Idaho's Basque population. For many children born to Basque immigrants, Euskara was the language within families, but English was spoken among friends. Most Basques assimilated into American life. Euskara was the language of their past and the transmission rate from native Basque speakers to their children born in the United States was low. This was not atypical. Studies show that ethnic groups tend to lose their language by the third generation.

As the Basque language diminished through cultural adaptation in the U.S., it faced an even greater setback in the Basque Country. The aggressive regime of Gen. Franco (1939–75) prohibited the Basque language throughout the Spanish side of the Basque Country, meaning generations lost an opportunity to learn the language. Castilian Spanish replaced Basque; those

who defied the Franco regime's order to discontinue Basque were punished, severely in many cases. For Franco, the continuation of

Euskara represented an attack on Spanish unity. The Basque language became highly controversial and politicized among the Basque community. Language is a foremost measure of Basque culture; in fact, Basques refer to themselves as *Euskaldunk* (one who speaks Basque), thus defining themselves by their language. The demise of the language, therefore, would signal a weakening of the community. During the final years of the Franco regime, the importance of Basque unity became more important than ever. To the Spanish government, the language became as dangerous as weapons or political organizing and thus became a target of oppression.

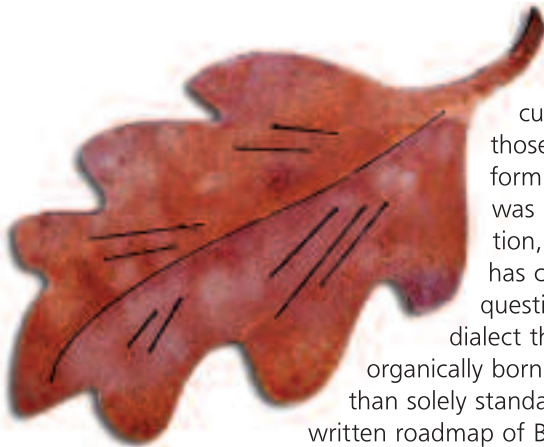
The language survived under the radar of the dictatorship through clandestine use in homes, isolated villages and in some cases, churches. Basque nationalism became a prominent feature in the fight against Franco's vision of a homogeneous Spain. Extremist actions garnered attention. The language was fused with Spanish sentiments that opposed Basque extremism, making Basque more than a language, but also a political sign.

During the last years of the Franco dictatorship, "The greater Basque community came to realize that in order to promote the language efficiently a standard dialect was needed to ensure that children would learn the same language in school and that publications would use uniform vocabulary and spelling," wrote Linda White and Thomas McClanahan in their essay "Translating the Culture." In the late 1960s, the *Euskalzaindia* (Academy of Basque Language) restarted the development of a standardized version of the Basque language, later known as *Euskara Batua* (unified Basque) or simply as *Batua*. *Batua*, created to overcome the gaps between provincial



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dialects that became barriers to cultural unity, took pieces from those dialects and created a standard form of the language. By 1976, Batua was used in government administration, teaching and media. Batua itself has created controversy because some question the cultural integrity of a dialect that was created rather than organically born. However, Batua has done more than solely standardize a language; it has created a written roadmap of Basque that facilitates the learning and transmission of the language regardless of access to *ikastolas* (schools in Basque) and *euskaltegis* (Basque language schools). In most cases, people still speak in their colloquial dialects; those have not been lost. The creation of the standard form in Batua, along with other factors, has served as a medium for the revival of the language.

Born during the transition years after Franco's dictatorship, Oihana Andion Martinez, a native Basque speaker now living in Idaho, reflected on the tension toward Basques in her home city of Pamplona. "I was not raised in a place where the government, like in the legal Basque Country or Catalonia, promoted and respected biculturalism. Instead, I remember a constant struggle to keep our heritage alive and present in everyday life. We were a minority in our own land." The language one spoke often represented political leanings. "I remember when I was younger—and even now when I go back to the Basque Country—there is this question, 'What are you?' Meaning, are you Basque or are you Spanish? People from Spain, people from Navarra and people from Euskadi ask that question. You are always put in doubt, and you have to take sides. You are instantly defined by the answer you give," Andion said.

In her homeland the pressure that comes from choosing the language is a very real factor in Basque speakers' decisions to use the language. For some, Basque is spoken in the home, but Spanish or French is the preferred vernacular with friends. For others, Basque is the language that they consciously speak every day as a means to keep their culture alive. And for many, Basque is a distant part of the community in which they live. For those who use Basque in everyday life, there is ultimately a degree of choice involved.

The current spoken rate of the Basque language in Spain varies among each province. Moreover, those who support the preservation of the lan-



San Telmo Museum

Badu, Bada, a touring exhibition, proudly celebrates Euskara and linguistic diversity, 2013. Opposite: copper oak leaf on Grove Street, a symbol of Gernika and Basque independence.

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Kirk Keogh www.first2lastlight.com



Euskara is the spoken language at the Boiseko Ikastola preschool. Opposite: Basque Museum whaling exhibit, a reminder of folkways that long predated Idaho's sheep camps.

guage do not necessarily speak it. "In the case of Euskara, because it is not an everyday necessity unless you make it so, we would speak Spanish because it was easier to communicate in the store, at the doctor, etc. And deep in our minds, I am sure we believed Euskara was a smaller language and that our bilingualism was less valuable than speaking Spanish and English," explained Andion about the conflict experienced by Basque speakers throughout the Basque Country. "Euskara had been stigmatized, secluded purposely by a bigger culture; the Spanish public policies were trying to dissipate the feeling of belonging to the Basque identity."

To combat language loss, ikastolas and euskaltegis provide education in the Basque language. Andion explained the role of the ikastola in promoting the language and culture: "My family belongs to a generation where speaking Basque or showing Basqueness was strictly prohibited and pun-

ished, but that era turned them into wild defenders of their culture. Like many other parents, they sent me to ikastola, where I became bilingual. In addition, we went to every protest and event in defense of our culture and language; they encouraged my speaking Basque, even if they didn't understand."

Idaho's Basque community has its own "wild defenders" of the language. Among the first was Joe Eiguren, who was recruited by the Oinkaris to teach them a few words in 1963. He organized the first Basque language class taught in Idaho, and possibly the U.S., according to authors John and Mark Bieter in *An Enduring Legacy*. There were no instructional materials, so Eiguren developed his own, writing a small book on the origins of the language and a grammar/vocabulary book. He taught language classes for several years and wrote a history of the Basques in 1972.

In 1998, the only Basque preschool outside the Basque Country, known as the *Boiseko Ikastola*, opened in Boise as the result of a group of determined parents and the commitment of the Basque Museum & Cultural Center. From economic support to learning materials, the Autonomous Basque Government in Spain played a major role in the Boiseko Ikastola. The preschool uses a full-immersion approach, educating children solely in



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Henar Chico



Boiseko Ikastola alums Andoni and Maitane Hollenbeck Chico, ages 9 and 7, speak English, Spanish, and a little Basque. Opposite: Euskara school flash-cards.

Euskara. Twenty-six students were enrolled as of March 2014. The school successfully transcends culture to open its doors to non-Basques. Now even homes of families without Basque heritage are filled with Euskara.

For adult students of Basque, the learning experience re-energizes the language in both their individual lives and in Basque communities throughout the world. Andion teaches an advanced Euskara class, originally taught by local Euskara enthusiast Izaskun Kortazar, through the Basque Museum &

Cultural Center. “Adult learners are the ones who, in the diaspora, are making Euskara flourish and stay in their communities; I relate to them because even if they know there are a few places to make use of Euskara, they still learn it ... more than practicality, they give Euskara a deeper value,” Andion explained. Thirty students are



taking classes offered through the museum’s programs and another eight are enrolled in Boise State courses during the spring 2014 semester.

Why do people learn such an “impractical” language? The common Basque saying “*Euskara bizi nahi dut*” provides an answer. Its meaning, “I want to live Basque,” speaks to a greater purpose for the Basque language than just communication. It is a way of life and a culture in its own right. Learning Euskara becomes a life-long journey. “By learning Euskara they are trying to develop a part of their identities; it is an exercise of introspection and connection with their roots; it is also a way to connect with other diaspora members by sharing a unifying symbol—Euskara,” said Andion.

Cody Beaudreau defies the stereotype of the Basque language student. His family is not Basque. He began to learn Basque simply out of curiosity. “Seeing the immigrant and subsequent generational community of Basques in Boise opened the door to the language. The more I learned the language, the more I learned about the community. That is where it all started,” said Beaudreau, who now has a strong command of the language. Beaudreau followed in the footsteps of the original group of Boise State University students who traveled to the Basque Country to study the language and live the culture. This enriching tradition of study abroad, initiated by BSU and the passionate work of professor John Patrick “Pat” Bieter, began in 1974 with the first group of 80 students living in the small town of Oñati. The options for study have expanded since then, but the experience remains life changing for students who embark on the journey. “I was fortunate enough to live

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A Boisean flashes her Euskadi tattoo at a Jaialdi celebration on Grove Street.

in a town [in the Basque Country] where a lot of Basque is spoken, so it was useful and practical to know and speak Basque. I saw firsthand that speaking Basque is like a key to culture. It lets you in. It went from being a hobby to being something that was actually practical,” Beaudreau said.

Maria Esther Ciganda Zozoya, a Spanish teacher originally from Moses Lake, Washington, had a different journey to learn Basque. “When we traveled to see our families in Navarra, my dad’s family would use Basque. As a child, I would ask my dad to teach us Basque, but we just learned very simple things. The focus was on Spanish in our house because it was the common language between my parents since my mom never learned Basque.” After a trip to compete in a pelota competition in France, Ciganda was invigorated to learn the language of her parents’ families. “I decided I would return in the summer and go to a *barnetegui* (intensive Basque language school). She has returned to the Basque Country since 2011 to take summer classes. For Ciganda, learning Basque is a lifelong ambition based on her family’s strong Basque background. “It has always been my desire to learn it since I was a child and heard my cousins use the language. For me it has always been a personal pursuit, and I finally started to achieve the dream.”



Language meets left-wing politics in this Gaztetxea “youth house” plea for Basque autonomy and cultural independence.

Huddled in the Basque Museum’s library, surrounded by literature and texts on all things Basque, Boise students use 21st century technology to learn the ancient language. Andion’s class watches short films in Euskara from *EiTB*, the Basque Country’s major media channel. Messages pop up on the screens of students’ phones from friends in the Basque Country. Websites and apps support Boise students by giving them a reason to use Basque in their everyday lives. Students like Beaudreau and Ciganda speak Basque with the everyday use of phones, tablets and computers. Ciganda’s phone is loaded with Basque language learning apps, such as *Auskalo*. Beaudreau regularly emails friends in Basque. Social media and technology have thrust the language into the everyday lives of Basque students throughout the world. People can have conversations in Basque on Google Chat

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Henar Chico



Joyful preschoolers wear Ikastola t-shirts. Opposite: Mus playing cards, an artifact from the boarding houses and still popular on Grove Street.

while emailing in English. Even Twitter jumped on the Basque bandwagon in 2012. Basque is now Twitter's second-most tweeted minority language.

Beaudreau urged caution about any languages' resilience to extinction. "It is tempting to say, 'Well, Euskara has been spoken for nobody knows how many thousands of years and it hasn't been lost yet.' So a lot of people tend to say, 'Basque hasn't died yet so it isn't going to.' But I think you should be careful with that. People have to choose to use it; it is ultimately up to the people. Otherwise, it will disappear," he explained.

The focus of the Basque community has shifted from exclusively defending its culture to ensuring its successful transmission to the next generation and to non-Basques alike. Assisted by initiatives that encourage the learning and speaking of Basque, the language will remain relevant and important to the worldwide Basque community. Idahoans, both Basque and non-Basque, are part of this new movement of Basque language revival. With technology at their fingertips, people with all degrees of fluency can now use Basque in a variety of ways, whether it is having a traditional conversation, sending an email to friends, tweeting a thought, listening to music or reading a classic book in Euskara.

For Basques like Andion, the future of Euskara is uncertain, but she hasn't written off the survival of the language yet. "I don't think anyone can predict the life expectancy of Euskara; as long as it stays alive, there will be hope. If Euskara has survived its troubled history, it only means that it has acquired the necessary tools to evolve and keep up with the modern world, no matter how old it is. As long as there are Euskara speakers interested in passing it along, Euskara will survive."



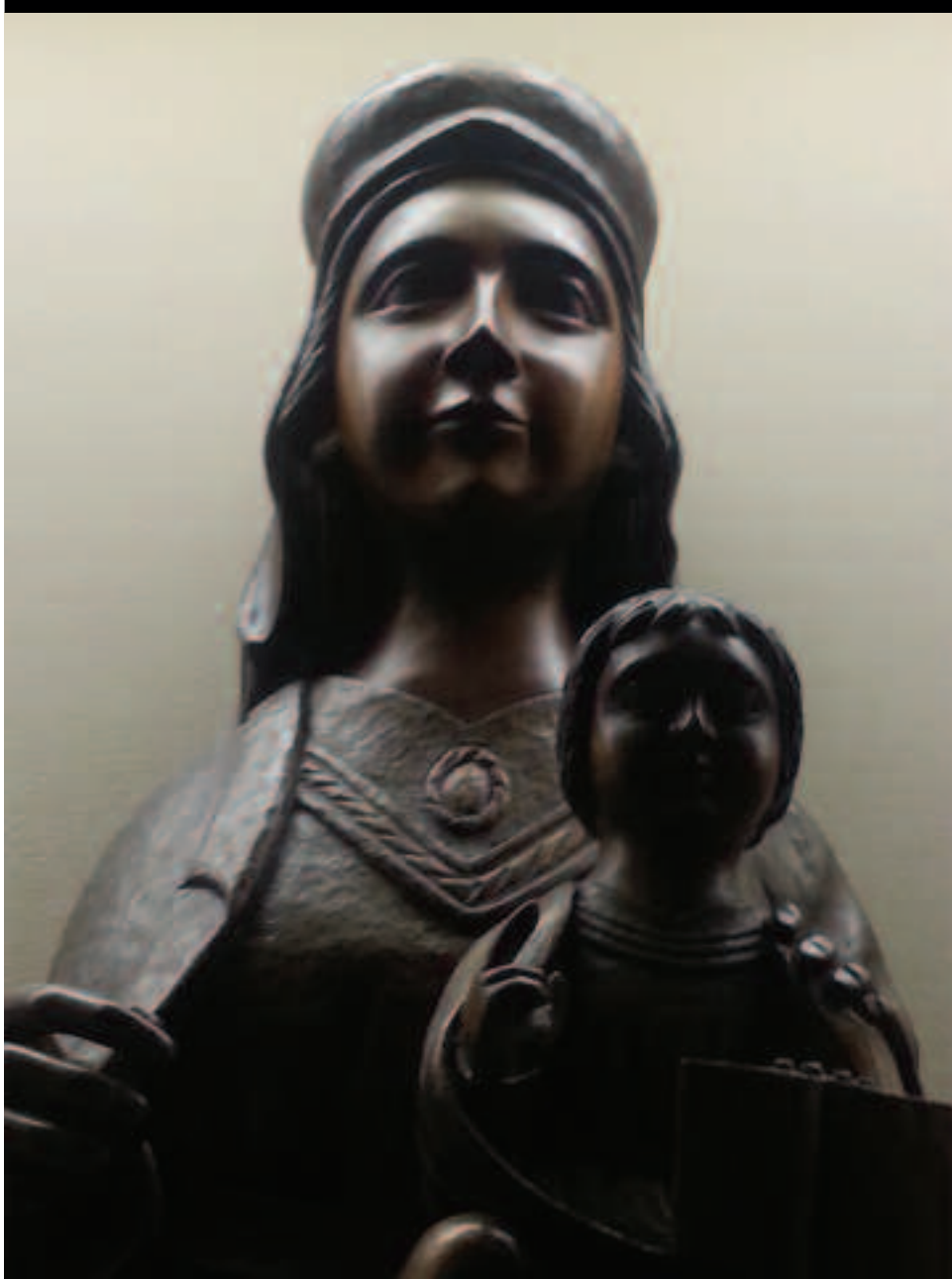
Euskara continues to prove itself as a master of reinvention, a language of resilience, a dual representative of personal choice and communal solidarity, an agent for evolution through undeniable adversity. With its history of oppression and a future of uncertainty, the language continues to stay alive in the minds of its supporters. It represents more than the right to speak its words; it represents the right of people to choose their own identity and ultimately write their own history. It is the essence of "becoming Basque."

• • •

Kattalina Marie Berriochoa, who speaks Basque and Spanish, holds a bachelor's degree in political science-international relations and comparative politics and a minor in Spanish from the University of Montana, Missoula and a master's degree in public administration from Boise State.

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Sue Paseman



Our Lady of Begoña, the patron saint of Bizkaia, graces the Basque chapel in Boise's Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

3 Church of the Good SHEPHERD

by Sue Paseman

Winter was slowly fading to spring when 100 parishioners crowded into the pews of their new church on March 2, 1919. At last, first- and second-generation Basques had a church of their own in the heart of the boarding houses scattered throughout the downtown area. The congregation quieted; all eyes and ears focused on Father Bernardo Arretium, speaking in Basque as he stood at the pulpit to bless the Church of the Good Shepherd.

"You have just given this church, an ornament to this hospitable city in which you live and to which you owe so much, and a joy and satisfaction to your parents who live on the other side of the broad Atlantic, and an inestimable inheritance for your children," he said. "This is one of the best buildings of its size in this part of the country, an honor to the Basques and a glory to the congregation, a splendid monument which will show to the generations to come what a few Basques of good will can do."

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Diocese of Boise



Father Bernardo Arregui, a Basque-speaking native of Gipuzkoa, reached Boise in 1911.

This spiritual cornerstone, the only Basque church ever built in the United States, was symbolic of how far the Basques had come since the late 19th century when they first arrived in the Boise area. The old Basque expression *Euskaldun Fededun*—“those who have the Basque language and those who have faith”—perfectly described its congregation.

The church’s evolution began in April 1885 when Bishop Alphonse Glorieux, Boise’s first bishop, arrived to lead the faithful after serving in western Oregon for 18 years. Boise was a missionary diocese that relied on foreign priests, the majority of whom were Irish. Ethnic Catholic enclaves in Idaho had an advocate in Bishop Glorieux. He was raised and educated in Belgium by strict Catholic parents who directed him toward a life in service to a church. Bishop Glorieux was concerned that Basque immigrants might lose their faith because they were away from home

in a place where they did not speak the language. He made arrangements with the Bishop of Vitoria in Spain for the services of Rev. Bernardo Arregui, a priest from Tolosa in the Basque Country, to serve in Idaho. Father Arregui arrived on July 11, 1911. His original appointment was to St. John’s Cathedral in Boise, but he administered Catholic sacraments throughout southern Idaho. The Rt. Rev. Daniel Mary Gorman replaced Bishop Glorieux in 1918. Gradually, momentum built to establish a separate parish for the Basques.

The February 28, 1919, *Idaho Statesman* headlined, “New Catholic Church Will Be Dedicated by Rt. Rev. Bishop Gorman—Spanish citizens of Boise Have Acquired Beautiful Little House of Worship.” The article reported that the single Sunday service held at St. John’s “was insufficient to provide



Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Good Shepherd was "a beautiful little house of worship," said the *Idaho Statesman*. Pictured: first communion in Boise, about 1920.

adequately for the special needs of these people." Bishop Glorieux recommended to Father Arregui "the immediate purchase of some suitable property and the erection of a church and parochial residence." Prominent Boise architect Charles F. Hummel drew up plans to remodel the two brick buildings on Fifth and Idaho streets. The property was purchased from local contractor and city councilman Thomas Finnegan and his wife for \$18,000 [\$243,243 in today's currency], which included funds to remodel and equip the buildings. To pay for the purchase, "subscriptions were solicited amongst the Spanish people."

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The *Statesman* monitored the conversion of the former two-story family dwelling into the Church of the Good Shepherd,

Todd Shallat



named to honor the Basques' connection with the sheep industry. In weekly updates, the

newspaper reported that the building was "in course of construction" and later commented, "The building is nearing completion and the church will be dedicated for Christian worship at an early date." In its February 9, 1919, issue, the *Statesman* updated the anxious new parishioners: "Practically all work on the church is finished and it is ready for the placing of pews

and altars, which are expected to arrive at an early date."

The chapel featured a brick exterior with a bell tower that rose above the entry. Instead of stained glass, windows were painted gold. One of the bay windows held a shrine to the Virgin Mary. Nothing about the space was ostentatious; after parishioners walked through the door, they passed through the vestibule and into the small chapel that seated up to 100. A choir loft, small apse, communion rail and altar were within the chapel. The altar was ordered from a company in the Midwest that specialized in manufacturing religious furniture. Designed to look like marble, it was actually enameled wood.



Idaho State Historical Society

Good Shepherd congregated about 100 parishioners. Opposite: church building without its steeple, 2014; St. Ignatius of Loyola.

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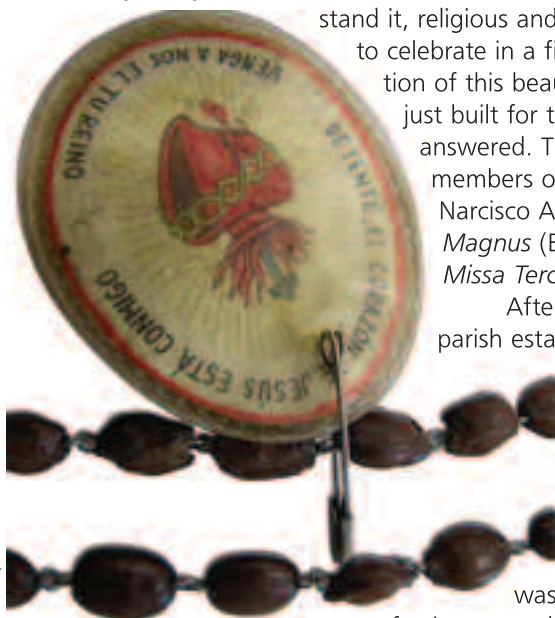
At the first service in March 1919, Bishop Gorman blessed the church and Father Arregui gave the first sermon—in Basque. “What is the reason for this splendid and solemn service? Why the presence of the Right Reverend Bishop, the clergy and the sisters? Why so many people congregated here? And why, lastly, these beautiful decorations?” Father Arregui asked. “I understand it, religious and pious brethren: you wanted

to celebrate in a fitting way the solemn dedication of this beautiful church which you have just built for the Lord of the Universe,” he answered. The Good Shepherd Choir, with members of the St. John’s Choir, led by Narcisco Aramburu, sang *Ecce Sacridos Magnus* (Behold a Great Priest) and *Missa Tercia* (Third Mass).

After its dedication, the new parish established the rhythms of the Catholic prayer and sacramental life. Father Arregui celebrated Mass on Sundays at 8 and 10:30 a.m. and held Sunday School at 2 p.m., with benediction following. Mass on weekdays was celebrated at 8 a.m. and confessions were heard on Saturdays from 4-5 and 7-9 p.m. Choir practice for adults was held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and for children Monday and Friday afternoons after school. Special Lenten services were scheduled for Friday evenings.

Father Arregui and the parishioners also founded Catholic associations to support the church. They established an Altar Society comprised of more than 30 women who elected a slate of officers and took responsibility for cleaning the church and priest’s vestments along with arranging the flowers and other decorations to mark the liturgical calendar. The group planned to hold baked food sales “to swell the church funds.”

On Tuesday evening, April 27, 1919, the *Statesman* reported that congregants from the church met at Father Arregui’s residence and organized the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception for young women and girls. The group elected a slate of officers and planned to sing at 8 a.m. Mass on Sundays. The next afternoon, young men and boys of the church gathered at Father Arregui’s residence and organized the St. Aloysius Society. They



also elected officers and the boys reportedly showed, "great enthusiasm" and "enjoyed candies" (perhaps to the disappointment of the girls group from the day before). The society expected to sponsor a picnic in the near future. Finally, the *Statesman* listed the names of 15 Basque boys who were assigned as alter servers at particular Mass times.

The church also began to mark the events, joyous and sad, in the lives of Basque families not only in Boise, but also throughout the area. In early November 1919, the *Statesman* reported the wedding of Luis Garmendia and Josefa Ygnacia Baringa-Rementeria. The bride, who "was pledged to Mr. Garmendia for some time, just came from Spain." The couple planned to "make their home in Oreana, where Mr. Garmendia is engaged in the sheep business." Parishioners also observed solemn occasions. Mr. and Mrs. Vicente Mendiola lost their eight-day-old baby, who died at Vale, Oregon. The remains were brought to Boise and Father Arregui held funeral services and the baby was later buried in Morris Hill Cemetery.

The local paper also recorded connections of the church to the broader American community. On November 27, 1919, the paper noted the daily Mass at the Good Shepherd to recognize Thanksgiving and in May 1921 listed the church among those that emphasized participation in music in conjunction with Boise's third annual Music Week celebration. The church appeared to have both community connections and an enthusiastic beginning. An anthropologist once described the three

Eastlake-style coat tree. Opposite:
rosary beads with beating heart oval.
From the Jacobs-Uberuaga collection at
the Basque Museum & Cultural Center.



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most important symbols for a Basque community: a handball court as evidence of a vibrant outdoor life; a cemetery, representing tradition; and the church, representing faith. The Basques in Boise had all three.

But the Church of the Good Shepherd continued as a Basque parish for



less than 10 years. In 1921, two years after the dedication, Father Arregui was reassigned to Twin Falls to minister to Basques throughout southern Idaho. From 1921 to 1928, a weekly Mass continued to be celebrated at Good Shepherd by an assistant from St. John's Cathedral. When the new prelate arrived in 1928, Bishop Edward J. Kelly discontinued this arrangement and instead made the church his private chapel and the rectory his residence. The Basque congregation once again became

a part of St. John's Cathedral.

Why were these actions taken? Were these merely practical decisions based on finances or were they made adhering to a particular ideology? The little Basque chapel in Boise was not immune from anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant forces that took their toll. Anti-Catholic sentiment came to the United States with the Pilgrims, who brought with them deep-seated Protestant (primarily from Northern and Western Europe) prejudices against what was viewed as a corrupted faith. In theory, this New World where one could practice his or her faith without fear of persecution also included Catholics. But they were not trusted. They were dogged by old presumptions that an unflinching allegiance to Rome and the pope would preclude any loyalty to the United States and to democracy. The Protestant socio-economic and political-class control would be vulnerable and the same religious battles left behind in Europe would be fought on American shores. Thus, it was implied that in the U.S. it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for one to be a good Catholic and a loyal U.S. citizen.

During Bishop Glorieux's tenure the American Protective Association, an anti-Catholic group that originated in Iowa in 1887, looked to gain an Idaho foothold in 1893. They preached antagonistic sermons about the



Library of Congress

Guards inspect immigrants' eyes at Ellis Island, 1920. Opposite: tabernacle for the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Church of the Good Shepherd, 1919 to 1928.

social chaos that would ensue if the Catholics were not kept in check. When the APA made its way to both Boise and Pocatello, Bishop Glorieux countered by sending two of his Dominican Fathers, James Newell and J.B. O'Connor, to those communities, where they gave sermons with a more decidedly charitable tone. Boiseans did not forget the bishop's work in the community during "the upbringing," as it was called. Local residents did not agree that Bishop Glorieux and his parishioners were disloyal to their country

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Domingo Onederra and Josefa Arriola pose for a wedding portrait in Boise, 1911.

and the APA never gained a foothold in Idaho. Nationally, the group ceased to function in the early 1900s. However, their anti-Catholic momentum had an impact in Washington, D.C. and clouded the political atmosphere that Bishop Gorman inherited after he arrived in 1918.

Congress passed two anti-immigration reforms in the 1920s: the Emergency Quota Act in 1921 and the Immigration Act, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, in 1924. Their main function was to preserve the ideal of American homogeneity. They limited the number of immigrants entering the United States based on the number of people from each country. The calculations for these quotas came from immigration records from either 1910 (the Emergency Quota Act) or 1890 (the Immigration Act). Overall, the number of Basque immigrants was small in comparison to other nationalities, primarily coming from Europe pre-1890. As such, they received low quotas. It was this shift that dropped the numbers of Southern Europeans, Basques included, almost 97 percent—a drop from 700,000 to 22,000.

The emphasis on Americanization pressured Catholic bishops to make decisions regarding the ethnic parishes. A review of the background of the bishops in Idaho provides context for their decisions. Born in Belgium, Bishop Glorieux brought with him the training and traditions from that country. Bishop Gorman came from Iowa; he focused on education and building schools. Gorman allowed for ethnic parishes not only in Boise but also in



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Ysidra Juanita "Jay" Arriola Uberuaga wears a linen baptismal gown, 1908.

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Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com



central and eastern Idaho, with their respective Italian and German populations. However, change came when Father Edward J. Kelly became Idaho's third bishop in 1928 following Bishop Gorman's death the prior year.

Bishop Kelly, a native Oregonian with an Irish background, was the youngest Catholic bishop in the country at that time. Under the guise of



Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com

St. John's Cathedral absorbed the Good Shepherd's reluctant Basque congregation. Pictured: honoring St. Ignatius at Boise's annual San Inazio Festival. Opposite: St. Ignatius of Loyola, Patron Saint of the Basques.

bringing the diocese into solvency, Kelly closed the Church of the Good Shepherd. His action and those of other Irish prelates who enjoyed disproportionate influence in the Catholic hierarchy, often drew the ire of Italian, German, French and other Catholic European immigrant groups. Bishop Kelly outlined his reasoning in his co-authored work, *History of the Diocese of Boise*. The arrangement with the Good Shepherd "was not destined to succeed," according to Kelly. "The Basques were becoming Americanized so quickly that they found they could attend services at the Cathedral the same as others." Also Kelly claimed that income was not sufficient to warrant the maintenance of a separate parish. Consequently, in September 1921, Father Arregui "was moved to Twin Falls to become an assistant pastor with the duties of ministering from this new headquarters to the Basque people

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Gabriel-Aldamiz/Flickr



Got Basque? A Boisean worships at Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, 2007 Opposite: rosary with silver cross from the Uberuaga House on Grove Street.

scattered in small settlements between Pocatello and Owyhee County," wrote Kelly in his history of the diocese. Reportedly, "this too proved unnecessary as the Basque men were away with the sheep all summer and the few families scattered here and there could have more regular services at the local churches."

The Church of the

Good Shepherd became Bishop Kelly's private chapel. However, Kelly witnessed the chapel's popularity. "Many a devout soul, living in that part of Boise, which is some distance from the Cathedral, could conveniently make a visit to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament ... at the present writing (1942) over seven thousand visits are made every year at the Church of the Good Shepherd." After he converted the church to his private chapel, Bishop Kelly built a small brick structure in the back for living quarters. The rectory was converted into the chancery next door. In 1956, after Bishop Kelly's passing, his successors built additions to the building. It discontinued as a church in 1958 and the disassembling process began. A family who lived on Warm Springs Avenue purchased the altar, which was built in five separate pieces. It remained in their garage until it was restored and placed in a niche dedicated to Our Lady of Begona in Boise's Sacred Heart Church. The tabernacle is now part of the Basque Museum's collection. Nothing else—pews, communion rail or other furnishings—survived.

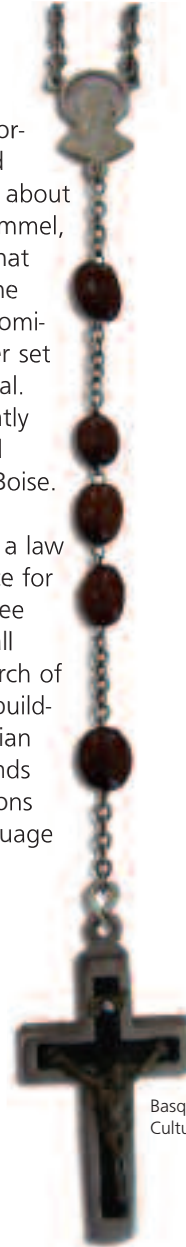
church good shepherd 63

What effect did the closing of the Good Shepherd have on the Basque community? It is difficult to generalize. One interviewee claimed his grandmother who lived in the neighborhood was more nostalgic than anything else about it, but had no outward anger toward the closing. Others remained bitter about the closing until the day they died. Boise architect Charles Hummel, whose father worked on the Good Shepherd design, stated that Bishop Kelly alienated many in the Basque community when he closed the church. One of the chapel's primary supporters, prominent sheep rancher John Archabal, stated that he would never set foot in a Catholic Church again. And he didn't—until his funeral.

Basques continue to celebrate Catholic Mass, but currently only two annual services are held specifically for Basques, and those take place within larger, non-ethnic-specific parishes in Boise. The diocese owned the property of the Church of the Good Shepherd until 1982, when Bishop Sylvester Treinen sold it to a law firm. Today, the former church is an administrative office space for St. Luke's Boise Medical Center. Currently, only two of the three essential symbols of a Basque community remain: the handball court and Basque section of the cemetery. The third, the Church of the Good Shepherd, is gone. Many make their way past this building in downtown Boise, possibly not knowing that this utilitarian and functional looking structure once was a place where friends and family gathered for Mass, weddings, baptisms, communions and funerals, to listen to their faith being spoken in their language that tied them to their home.

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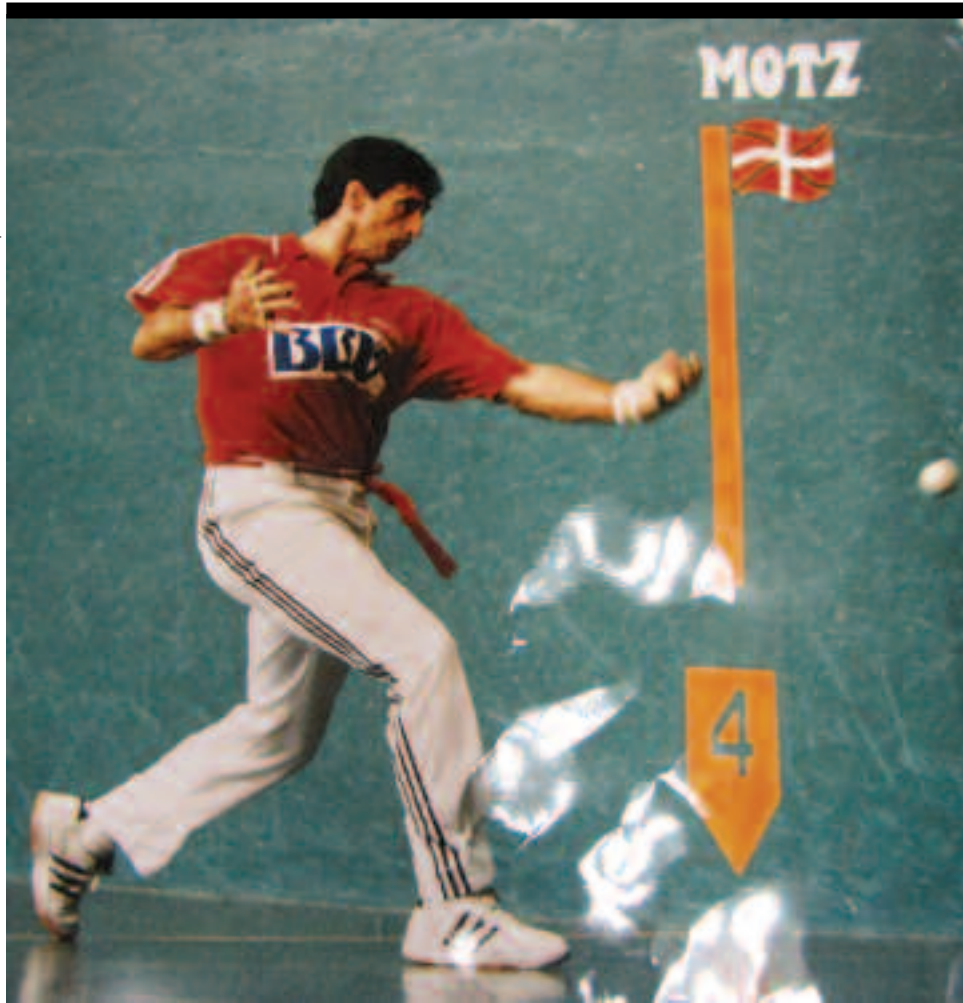
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Basque handball champion Retegi II lunges into a forehand below the national flag at the Arizbatalde Fronton, 1997.

4 Boise's Wrigley FIELD

by Mark Bieter and John Bieter

There aren't that many active sports facilities in the United States that are 100 years old. Fenway Park in Boston turned 100 in 2012. The Wrigley Field in Chicago turns 100 in 2014. Soldier Field in Chicago, the oldest NFL stadium, was built in 1924. In Boise, there are few 100-year-old buildings of any kind. But there is a 100-year-old sports facility—the indoor handball court (*fronton*) located on the Basque Block. John Anduiza, born in 1915, grew up with the handball court outside his door. It was inside his parents' boarding house in downtown Boise. As a boy, he could step out any time and watch the games. Usually the players were young Basque boarders. Thousands of miles from home, they spent almost all year working lonely manual jobs in the middle of nowhere, mostly herding sheep. When winter came, they drove the sheep down from the hills and into the camps. Then they were out of work for a while. Most of them went to places like the Anduizas' boarding house.

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Kirk Keogh www.first2lastlight.com



The boarding house, which opened in 1914, was like a piece of home. Meals like home, conversations like home, games like home. The court was right outside their rooms under the same roof. There was always somebody to play with. Many of them played *pala*, slapping the rubber ball to the towering front wall with

wooden mallets, leaving hundreds of marks that stayed for decades. Some of the braver ones played handball. Most had not played for months, maybe years, and that created a challenge. A Basque handball isn't rubber. It's hard, almost like a baseball. The cover is leather. There's very little bounce. It takes a lot of force to get the ball moving fast enough to get a game going. It's not a sport for casual players. It's best played frequently, so the hand has a chance to build up the right calluses.

The boarders had strong hands from their manual labor, but it probably hurt like hell for them to play, John Anduiza thought decades later. But none of them would let on. "They would hit that ball," he said, "and in maybe four or five points their hands would swell up." They could barely play anymore. At that point, he recalled, some would seek help from his dad, "Big Jack" Anduiza. Big Jack would have the players put their hands flat on the stairway by the court. "He'd use this wooden board to step on their hands to take the swelling out." Since Big Jack weighed 240 pounds, his son recalled, that seemed to do the trick. "They'd go back, and play five more points. Those guys from the old country were tough."

There were at least three other places to play in Boise at the time. But Anduiza's court had a lot of advantages. It was the only indoor Basque handball court in the United States at that time. It was the biggest in town by far. The Anduizas put a lot of effort and money into this aspect of their



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Henry Alegria and Stack Yribar dress smartly for pelota at the Anduiza Fronton, 1937. Opposite: Edu Sarria of the Boise Fronton Association.

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The Anduiza Hotel and Fronton Building, built in 1914. Inset: *palas* (thick wooden paddles) smack the *pelota* (leather or rubber ball).

hotel. “Everything about that building was tied to the court,” Dave Everhart of Preservation Idaho said. “It wasn’t like a boarding house with a court attached. It was more like a court with a boarding house attached.”

The Anduizas knew what they were doing. Big Jack and his wife, Juana Gabiola, were born in the Basque province of Bizkaia, immigrated to Idaho, settled in Boise in 1891—a year after Idaho’s statehood—and eventually got into the boarding house business, opening the City Lodging House on Ninth Street in 1906. Not long after, they decided to make a bolder move. In 1914, they bought a lot on Grove Street, near the corner at Capitol Boulevard. It was a few blocks from the Idaho State Capitol, whose east and west wings were still years from being started.

There were many other Basque boarding houses throughout Idaho at the time, but this building was different. It was designed entirely around the



BoisebyBurns.com

Historic view of the Anduiza Fronton. The wooden-truss construction opens the court to daylight.

handball court. The first floor had 11 rooms, the Anduizas' private apartment, a dining room, a kitchen and storage rooms. They all opened onto the court. Above, there were more rooms opening up to a balcony that overlooked the court. The fronton itself was big—28 feet wide and 122 feet long. It rose about 50 feet, but since it was fully enclosed, its purpose was undetectable from Grove Street. They installed a wooden truss to support the roof, which had openings to bring daylight onto the court and into the rooms and dining area. They installed netting to protect balls from escaping. And they surrounded it all with mounds of concrete, all the way up and down the walls and over the playing surface. The Anduizas didn't seem to think of the building as a short-term investment. There wasn't much else the fronton could be used for.

The Anduiza's was the fourth and last fronton built in Boise. The first went up in 1910, at the Basque Hotel on 631 Lovers Lane, an address that

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doesn't exist anymore. Another was constructed that same year on the west side of the Iberia Hotel on South Ninth Street. Both were outdoors and had a sidewall to the left. In 1911, the Uberuaga family built a fronton by their boarding house at 512 West Idaho Street. Firefighters at the nearby firehouse would climb the sidewall and watch the strange games. The sidewall of the Uberuaga fronton still stands today, bordering a parking lot.

But none of them could compete with Anduiza's new court. It was bigger, covered for year-round play and had a third wall in the back. There was a lot of anticipation surrounding the first official game played on the court on Friday, January 29, 1915, between Boise and Shoshone. The Boise players were Big Jack and Henry Alegria. Big Jack covered the backcourt, Alegria remembered, "and I played in the front with him ... We won the game, but it was close. The balcony and downstairs were full. People came from Shoshone, Mountain Home, and even farther away. It was a capacity house." The *Idaho Statesman* covered the game, reporting that the Boiseans won 50-48 with "prowess." "Shouts and hurrahs coming from the vicinity of Sixth and Grove streets caused some conjecture as to what might be the matter Friday afternoon," the *Statesman* reporter wrote. "It is an odd game played in a walled court, the ball is batted about with small paddles." The "Spaniards" watching, he wrote, "were deeply engaged. This game means as much to the [Basques] as baseball and football do to the Americans."

The collection of Basque ball games known as *pelota* goes back centuries. The Prussian scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt, who studied the Basques extensively, wrote in the 1820s that "the game of pelota ... is the principle fiesta of the Basques. Not only does every town have its own fronton, erected with greater or lesser splendor, but also everyone participates in the game ... [R]egardless of social class differences, much of the town, men and women, and even the mayor and the priest show up on Sundays to watch the players." Even the tiniest of Basque villages has had at least one fronton for centuries, typically in a central place and quite often next to the other pillar of every Basque community, the church. In many cases, the side or front playing wall was the church.

Although it has developed variations over the years, *pelota* is a fairly simple game—or maybe better said—group of games. In its most basic (and probably oldest) form, two teams of two players alternate hitting a solid ball wrapped in leather against a wall with their bare hands, trying to keep it within the side boundary, above the front fault line, and as far away as possible from the opposing team. One player on each team covers the back of the court and the other the front. While courts may differ between the northern and southern sides of the Basque County, most often there is one

wrigley field 71



Carl Burnett/Wikimedia Commons

The Anduiza hosted its first hand-swelling game of pelota in 1915. It remains the nation's oldest still-active indoor fronton.

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Josu Landaluze



“Eh ... Txo Txo! Your Amuma doesn't play Pala here, so pick up your mess!” So says the posted flyer at Anduizas' fronton.

wall on the left side, which is both an obstacle and a strategy tool. Pelota is a good sport for the ambidextrous. Returning a ball that's careening along the wall can be difficult. The front players, if positioned just right, can bank shots that hit the left wall, the front wall, and then the floor, eventually spinning out of bounds and beyond the reach of the opposition. Or they may go deep, whacking the ball with such force that it travels to the far end of the court, where it can be difficult to return. A simple but challenging game, it became highly popular in the Basque Country. It didn't require much equipment or money. All they needed was a ball and a wall.

Pelota became so essential to Basques that they took it with them as they moved to all corners of the new world—as participants in the Spanish explorations and conquests, as settlers in the colonies, as refugees from war, as immigrants looking for a new future.

Once in the Americas, as Carmelo

Urza of the University of Nevada, Reno wrote, Basques “tended to confront the unpredictabilities of a strange land by banding together to conduct business and to share the language, foods, and festivals of their native land. Basque pelota was one of these cultural icons which served both as a form of recreation and as a cultural sacrament.”

Frontons were introduced early in the Basques' settlement in the Americas and spread quickly and widely. By 1634, there were at least two frontons in Lima, Peru. In the 1700s, Basques in Santiago, Chile, built one on the central Calle San Isidro, which became known as the *calle de la pelota*. Hundreds of courts were built in Uruguay after a flood of French-Basque



Allan Ansell

immigration in the mid-19th century. More than 300 adobe or stone frontons are still playable in Bolivia. There are about 200 in Cuba. Over the centuries, there have been at least a thousand built in North and South America with a wide variety of materials and sizes. The builders and players had the advantage of pelota's flexible and informal rules. Frontons are somewhat like major league baseball fields. Each has a different size and different quirks.

As Urza pointed out, the spread of pelota by Basques in the Americas led to some adaptations and spin-offs. In 1905, a Basque player in Argentina began to bat a ball around with the shoulder blade of a cow. He thought he was on to something. He asked a local carpenter to make a wooden

mallet in the same shape. It led to the creation of pala, which is the form of pelota most widely played around the world. Another variation became the



Arthur Hart

Ruin of the Star's fronton, Idaho Street, 2013. Inset: Pedro Anchustegui Pelota Court, Mountain Home, Idaho.

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Sege Camy/Merry Festival



Jai alai spread to Miami via Cuba with the Basque diaspora. Pictured: leaping No. 2 Sege Camy in a Miami casino fronton, about 1970.

world's highest-profile version of pelota. Recovering from a broken wrist, a Basque-Argentine player began to use a wicker basket to hurl the ball. It was the birth of *jai alai*, a sport that's known for having the fastest ball in the world and the source of a multi-million dollar industry. It has been played in places as varied as Las Vegas, Caracas, Manila and Shanghai.

Basques immigrated to the United States later than they did to Latin America, largely in the latter half of the 19th century.

Frontons sprouted wherever Basques moved to—California, Nevada, Oregon and Idaho. Basque boarding house owners usually built the courts to draw customers, much as a hotel chain today features a pool or workout room.

In Idaho, besides the four Boise frontons, there were two in Mountain Home finished by 1920, one of which is still used. There was a court right across the border in tiny Jordan Valley, Oregon, built between 1915-17 from stones quarried in the nearby hills. In California, where there are large communities of French-Basques, more modern frontons have been built in recent decades in cities such as Bakersfield and Fresno. The crown jewel of frontons in the United States—aside from the jai alai gambling centers in places like Orlando and Miami—is the one located at the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, built in 1982, which hosts tournaments featuring players from around the world.



Josu Goni Etxabe/Wikimedia Commons

Jai alai rebounds in Manila, 2009.

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But the oldest fronton still in use in the United States is the one in Boise that Big Jack and Juana Anduiza built in 1914. It was a success from the beginning. Thousands of games followed the inaugural January 1915 match. "I loved to play pala," said Stack Yribar, whose family ran a boarding house across the street. "I lived it. Every chance we got we played. We even played with golf balls." The Anduiza fronton, he said, "was the best in the United States."



trophees-prestige.com

Because it was covered, it was particularly popular in winter, when most of the immigrants were on breaks. "Christmas day the handball courts of Spanish Frank, on Idaho street between Fifth and Sixth streets, and of Jack Anduiza at 619 Grove street were the scenes of spirited matches," the December 26, 1918 edition of the *Idaho Statesman* reported. "It was like the flash of sunny Spain incorporated

into the holiday festivities of the Boise organizations and families, despite the fact that the cold, nipping air of winter held the thermometer below freezing throughout the day."

The game might have been simple, but getting the right equipment wasn't. It was the same everywhere pelota was played outside the Basque Country. In 1557, the Basque governor of the Spanish colony in Chile went to great lengths and expense to import 3,000 handballs, and there may not have been a larger single shipment of pelota equipment to Latin America for the next four centuries. Players in the Americas had to improvise. In the late 19th century, virgin American rubber was incorporated into the balls, making it, as Carmelo Urza described, "livelier and dramatically transforming pelota into a much quicker and more interesting game." Players used whatever they could. They used tennis balls. Golf balls. All kinds of wood were used to make palas. Sometimes they would shatter to bits on a cold day, and the carpenters had to start over. It wasn't any easier for players at Anduizas'. Big Jack had to make balls. Everyone had to cut palas themselves, just as the

Argentine inventor had decades earlier, modeled after the shoulder bone of a cow.

Many of the Basque shepherders, who had thought they would only be in the United States for a few years, began to realize they would be there for the rest of

their lives. They married and had kids, and those kids grew up watching and playing pala and handball at Anduizas'. But they were also playing baseball and football. And there were fewer new pelota players to watch and learn from. By the 1940s, after federal legislation had essentially shut down open range sheepherding in the western United States, the flow of Basque immigration slowed, and so did the number of boarders and the number of games. "As the second-generation Basques progressed through American schools, their interests shifted to American sports," John Edlefsen wrote about Boise Basques in the 1940s. "The foreign-born became too old for this fast, strenuous game [of handball] ... the pelota courts will probably never again resound to the smash of the pelota on concrete walls and to the shouts of the excited spectators." Joseph Harold Gaiser predicted in 1944 that most of the frontons "will probably remain as ruins when the last foreign-born pelota player has passed away."

By then, Big Jack was getting older (he would die in 1947). He didn't play anymore. The Anduizas opened the fronton to boxing matches on the weekends instead of pelota games. The bouts were crowded and smoky. People leaned over the rails of the balcony to watch and bet. Babe Anduiza, Big Jack's grandson, fought in some of the bouts as a kid with "the big gloves ... the most important part of the experience was after the fight.



Boise Fronton Association

The Boise Fronton Association sponsors league play, tournaments and a children's camp. Opposite: pelota trophy.

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Urban Act



Promoting "world's best" pelota extravaganza in Bordeaux, France, 2013.

Everybody threw money into the ring, and we'd get coffee cans and pick it up and take it home."

The Anduizas sold their boarding house, including the fronton, in March 1945 to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which used it for a few years for meetings and drills. There were no more games on the court. The VA painted a large red, white and blue star in the center of the court. The VA sold the building to Briggs Engineering, Inc. in 1948. Briggs converted the boarders' rooms upstairs by the balcony into offices. It used the court downstairs for equipment storage for the next three decades.

In the 1960s, Boise had a population of about 35,000, but it doubled over the next ten years. The Boise Redevelopment Agency, created in 1965, soon began to raze Boise's iconic buildings. As L.J. Davis wrote in *Harper's Magazine* in 1974, "If things go as they are, Boise stands an excellent chance of becoming the first American city to have deliberately eradicated itself." Partly to inspire a rebirth of central Boise, the BRA in the late 1960s and early 1970s wanted to build an 800,000 square-foot shopping mall in the middle of downtown, requiring the clearance of eight blocks. One of the buildings directly in the path of the agency's plan of destruction was the 1927 vintage Egyptian Theater, then known as the Ada Theater. It was just a block from Anduizas' fronton, which could have been a prime spot to install an underground parking lot for the new shopping mall.

Maybe it was because the BRA's dream of a mall downtown died. Maybe it was because the area near Grove Street was like a desert then or maybe because Boise's economy in the 1970s was sputtering. But somehow the Anduizas' fronton, filled with bulky equipment and dust, survived the wrecking ball. In 1972, the newly formed Idaho Basque Studies Center reached an agreement with the owners of the Briggs Engineering firm to begin using the fronton again. As Gloria Totoricaguena wrote in *Boise Basques: Dreamers and Doers*, the groups undertook the Herculean task of cleaning and restoring a court that hadn't been used for play in almost 30 years. Volunteers "renovated the fronton by cleaning and painting the walls and surfaces, replacing the lights for night time practice and games and building a screen to protect the spectators from being hit by errant balls." They made multiple trips to Seaman's Gulch landfill "with years of trash and accumulated Briggs storage," she wrote.

The court became playable again. Younger Basque immigrants began to put on handball exhibitions on Saturday nights. "For many," Totoricaguena wrote, "these games and gatherings brought back the memories of the decades when the boarding houses were full of emigrants and

The Beret Project





Grahmc99/flickr

Mexico City's Art Deco Fronton Building, opened in 1929, was "the place for pelota" before its decline in the 1990s. Opposite: Deco shoe advertisement, France, about 1936. Next: pelota players, Valencia, 2012.

the sound of a ball repeatedly smacking a cold, hard wall was an everyday occurrence."

Anybody who wanted to play could get the key from the bar at the Basque Center on the other end of Grove Street. Henry Alegria and other older players gave occasional handball or pala workshops to children on Saturdays. Occasionally, experienced players from the Basque Country would come play. In August 1977, a group of eight Basque handball players put on an exhibition at Anduizas'. Young Boiseans watched them play and met them afterwards and shook their hands. It was like shaking hands with a brick. It seemed like a game worth playing.

The fronton had barely changed since 1914. It was really just a big concrete room, dimly lit. It was suffocating in summer, freezing in winter. The rain leaked down the sidewall and pooled, sometimes freezing overnight. It was a musty, dark place with lots of echoes. Shafts of light came through the few windows at the top and spread over the walls, on the hundreds of marks from all those balls over the previous decades. You could smell the 1920s. You could hear pigeons in the beams.

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There was chicken wire at the roof, but it had holes and the balls would sometimes sneak through them. Since equipment was still precious, the games would stop and players would run to the alley behind the front wall, trying to get lucky by finding an escaped ball underneath a dumpster or in the gutter. If the ball was lost, the game was over. You couldn't run to the sporting goods store for a replacement.



But people somehow kept playing. In

1993, Rich Hormaechea and Adelia Simplot bought the Anduiza building, and they

eventually leased the court to the

newly created Boise Fronton Association. The association welcomed anyone who wanted to play for a small membership fee. The group began to sponsor formal fall and spring leagues and tournaments to decide who would represent Boise in the annual pelota championships of the North American Basque Organization, which were played throughout the West. It also encouraged women to play, something that didn't happen when the fronton was first built. Dozens of women competed in a league that also sent representatives to the NABO tournaments. The organization also raised thousands of dollars to remodel and improve the fronton. They

repainted the walls, installed more lights and cleaned up the floor. The faded red, white and blue star from the VA days was sanded off and cracks in the floor were filled, leaving a smooth playing surface. Today, players use the renovated court almost every day.

The Anduiza fronton is now a good enough facility that it takes a turn as host of the NABO men's and women's pelota championships every four or five years. When the fronton association hosted the championships in 2010, men and women from the United States, Venezuela, Argentina and the Basque Country came to play. The fronton was packed and the games were simulcast to the Basque Center, where Jaialdi 2010 was underway. In the Basque Country, Euskal Telebista, the Basque public television station, featured live play-by-play and interviews with the coaches and players.

During that NABO tournament, a pala player from California, accustomed to playing on the beautiful, more modern court in San Francisco, won a match despite having to negotiate the many challenges of the cramped old hot Anduiza fronton. Somebody asked him if it was hard to play in those conditions. "No way," he said. "To us, it's like playing at Wrigley Field."

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Basque festival sports called *herri kirolak* originate from the physical hardship of agrarian life. Pictured: Benedicto "Benny" Goitiandia, shouldering 250 pounds in a *harrijasotzaileak* (stone-lifting) competition

5 Work Hard, PLAY HARD

by Heidi Coon and John Ysursa

Two large monuments that carry symbolic importance to the preservation of Basque ethnic heritage frame the west entryway to the Basque Block on Grove Street. These monuments are large representations of the traditional Basque farm implement called the *laia*. In earlier times before mechanized farming, this tool was used to prepare the soil for seeding the crops. Usually, several people joined together for this task because it was hard work digging into and turning the soil. The *laia* therefore symbolizes what the Basque Block is about for Boise Basques: every generation of Basques has to join together to symbolically turn the soil and prepare it for a new “crop” or generation of Basque youth. Basques are not many, and in a society with powerful forces that can erode ethnic identity, the job of transmitting Basque identity across generations is not an easy one. It requires a commitment to join with others to find effective ways to keep alive the process of “becoming Basque.” Thus, the *laia* illustrates a



defining cultural trait that helps to explain why Basques are still around: "Work hard, play hard."

Today's Basques participate in a wide assortment of sports. Some of these sports are recent in origin, relatively speaking, in relation to Basque history.

The current popularity of soccer in the Basque Country, for example, dates to the late 19th century when it was first introduced there by British groups playing the sport. Golf, basketball, cycling and other such recent introductions are also omnipresent, but when we speak of "Basque" sports, the scope narrows to a handful of contests. In Basque they are known as *herri kirolak* (traditional Basque sports), which conjures up images of wood chopping and stone lifting.

Related contests include *sokak* (tug-of-war), *probak* (stone dragging) and a Basque version of rowing, among others. With the exception of Basque handball and its variants, all of these contests emerged from a more distant past; most traditional Basque sports originated from a form of work that evolved into a contest of strength, with wagers on the outcome.

Two defining characteristics of traditional Basque society include strength and



Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com

Sokatira (tug-of-war) competition at Jaialdi, 2005. Opposite: sheepherders alone against the elements connected with solitary boxers fighting for masculine pride. Pictured: heavyweight Paulino Uzcudun, nicknamed "The Basque Woodchopper," about 1933.

perseverance. Both were highly valued for the direct utility to one's livelihood and preservation of tradition. These sports evolved from an earlier world where most everyone lived by their hands, working on the farm or gripping a fishing net. Hunger was a constant, with the threat of a bad crop or poor fishing at sea being the difference between eating well or going hungry. But even in good times, there was much hard work to do.

To appreciate the origins of these sports, still seen today at many Basque-American festivals and on the Basque Block, is to have a window into traditional Basque society, which has undergone two key transformations: the shift from the countryside to the city (from agrarian to urban) and the move from animate to inanimate power with the mechanization of agriculture. Similarly, today only about one of ten Americans is involved in food production and tractors speedily tend to the crops and motors propel boats at

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Aizkolaritza (wood chopping) ranks high in the pantheon of rural festival sports. Pictured: competing at Jaialdi, 2005.



Wikimedia Commons

Competitors use the traditional two-pronged *laia* in a race to see which team can bust the most acreage of soil.

sea. But these are quite recent changes. Before these innovations, power had to be marshaled from animate sources; people and animals had to pull the plow through the field.

Strong animals like oxen were highly prized for their ability to move large, heavy loads on the farm, and from this emerged the contest of *idi probak* (oxen tests). It was quite straightforward: which team of oxen could pull a large stone weight the greatest distance in a fixed amount of time. While animal rights activists might cringe at this test of strength, if it is any consolation, the Basques also subjected men to the same contest. In this version, known as *gizon probak* (man's test), one man was harnessed to the stone to see how far he could drag the heavy weight. Another human variation on this test of strength includes *txinga probak*, which makes use of two weights, each as heavy as 104 pounds in each hand; contestants carry them until they can go no farther and drop the weights to the ground. This contest is still a popular staple at many a Basque festival, including Boise's annual San Inazio Festival weekend at the end of July.

Another popular test of strength still seen at some Basque festivals—only some because these contests require a degree of training and thus the pool of competitors remains limited—are the variations of *harrijasotzalea* (stone lifting). For many years through the 1950-70s, Boise's Benedicto "Ben" Goitiandia and Jose Luis "Joe" Arrieta traveled extensively across the

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Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com



A public lecture on folk traditions, sponsored by Boise State Basque Studies, packed the Egyptian during Jaialdi, 2010. Opposite: commemorative stamps.

American West to put on exhibitions at Basque festivals. These and other men thus successfully transplanted this traditional Basque sport, and kept it going for many years. More recently Joe Arrieta's son Jon kept that tradition alive with periodic exhibitions.

In this Basque version of weightlifting, in place of bars with dumbbell weights at the end

Basques substitute *zilandroa* (cylindrical), *laukizuzena* (rectangular), *kuboa* (cubical) or *biribila* (round or circular) weights that range anywhere from 100 to 500 pounds. This contest can vary—sometimes it is a head-to-head competition as to who can lift the greater weight or the greatest number of lifts in a fixed

time period. Or it can be an attempt to break a weightlifting record. The rules are straightforward: the stone has to be handled so it ends up on the competitor's shoulder, at which point it can be dropped onto a pad in front of the *harrijasotzaile* (stone lifter).

Almost all of these contests are tests of strength and perseverance, and not all have been transplanted to Idaho. The coastal towns in the Basque Country still carry on the tradition of the *estropadak* (rowing). Originally this form of work entailed a group of men rowing out to sea to harvest the day's catch of anchovies and sardines and bringing it back to market—before the other boats—to fetch a better price. Today, this has evolved into a popular competition with boats of 13 rowers. There has been no *estropadak* contest in Boise—yet! But there have been many tug-of-war matches where again strength and perseverance are put to the test.

But probably one of the most spectacular displays of Basque sports at festivals in the West is that of the *aizkolari* (wood chopper). The Basque Country remains significantly forested, and before mechanized saws, the job of felling trees and sizing lumber relied on men wielding axes and handsaws. Honing their skills working through the timber, Basque woodchoppers challenged one another to see who could chop the fastest, and once again this early form of work transformed into a competition. Between two men or



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Jaialdi invites visitors to “eat, drink and be Basque.” Organizers expect more than 40,000 visitors in 2015. Next: Basquing near Sun Valley.

teams, it is a race to see who could cut through an allotted number of logs on both sides. When two or more aizkolari form a team, they take turns relieving each other because this contest puts a premium on stamina. Competitions can last well beyond half an hour, and some Basque Country events have gone beyond four hours! Tellingly, the contest does not end when one chopper or team cuts through its last log; it is not over until the second teams finishes what it started, cutting through its last log. You finish what you start, and you’re not done until you’re done—in a word, perseverance.

Basque festival organizers make a special effort to bring groups of competitors from the Basque Country to put on spectacular exhibitions of herri kirolak. The largest exhibition in Boise occurs at the Jaialdi Festival, where two teams square off in a race to see who can cut through their logs, lift their weight a given amount of times, run relays, hoist bales of hay, etc. Again, the competition does not end until the second-place team finishes. Thus, this and the other traditional Basque sports reflect the cultural emphasis not only on strength, but also on perseverance.

Jaialdi International Basque Cultural Festival

Once every five years, the annual San Inazio Festival in July morphs into something quite distinctive, bringing together literally tens of thousands to gather for a series of cultural events that are staged with mostly volunteer



Jaialdi International Basque Cultural Festival

help. A festival of this scope requires an incredible amount of work, with preparations beginning two years beforehand. And when it all comes together, it makes for one of the largest Basque gatherings anywhere in the diaspora. Known as *Jaialdi* (festival time), it has become a defining element not just for Basques, but also for the greater Boise area and state of Idaho.

The idea for Jaialdi started in a car coming back to Boise from a 1986 North American Basque Organization meeting held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Jokin Intxausti, minister of culture for the Basque government, happened to be along for the ride back and the conversation shifted to big dreams for Boise Basques. Al Erquiaga told the minister of his hopes for a large Basque festival in Boise. Intxausti's response: "Let's do it." So in 1986 they formed a planning board consisting of Dave Navarro, Gerri Achurra, Miren Artiach, Jeanne Eiguren, Megan Overgaard, Delphina Arnold, Patty Miller, Albert Erquiaga, Dave Eiguren, John Bieter, Dan Ansotequi, Dave Baumann, Hank Achurra, Patxi Lostra and Jerry Aldape. The Euzkaldunak board approved of the idea and Boise's first Jaialdi was underway.

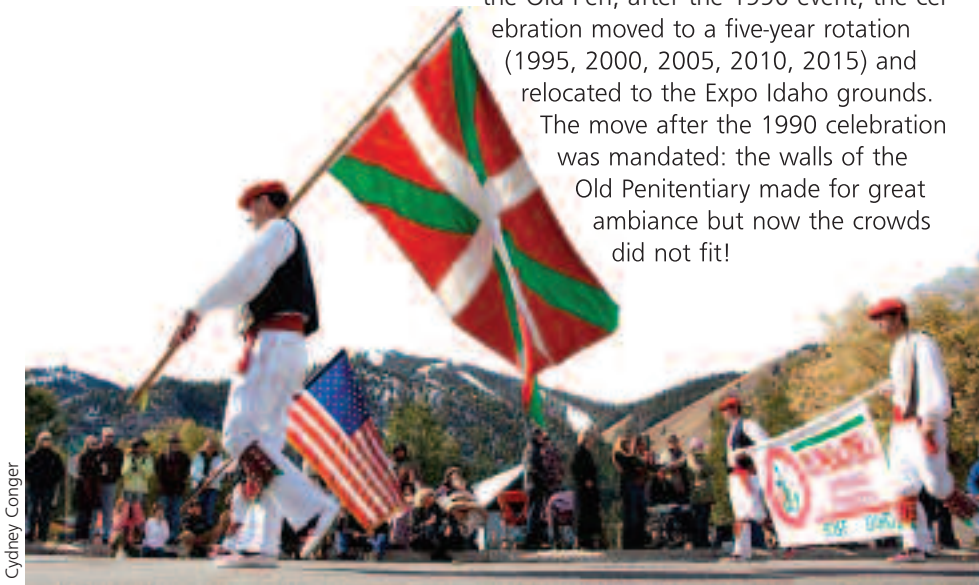
There was a precursor of sorts back in 1972 called the Basque Holiday Festival. It was successful, but there was no follow-up event, so when Jaialdi started it was almost from scratch again. Jaialdi in its present form began June 19–21, 1987, on the grounds of the Old Idaho Penitentiary at the end of Boise's Warm Springs Avenue. The inaugural event included local, national and international Basque dancing groups, music, sports and of course, good food. Buildings and roads around the Old Pen took on Basque names for the festival. Months and months of preparation went into the event, but organizers could not really be sure of its appeal and draw until the date arrived. The celebration began with the dedication and grand opening of the Basque

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Museum in downtown Boise near the Basque Center. At the close of the first day, musicians, dancers and Basque athletes performed to a sold-out crowd at the Boise High School Auditorium. Festivities moved to the penitentiary grounds for the weekend, attracting huge crowds and drawing thousands of Basques from all around the country, and internationally as well. But it wasn't just the Basques who came: Jaialdi became a moment for many fellow Idahoans to meet their Basque neighbors.

The Boise Basque community, with many committees and hundreds of volunteers, had done it again. Back in 1949, the Basques of Boise introduced themselves to their neighbors at the popular "Song of the Basque" performance during Boise's Music Week. It was a coming out event for that generation and a true turning point for the Boise Basque community. And now Jaialdi repeated something similar for another generation. It instilled a stronger sense of pride for the Basque community as well as inspiring a new generation to "work hard, play hard." Its impact in the larger community resonated, as Idaho's state government asked the Basques to stage a second Jaialdi three years later to help commemorate the state's centennial in 1990. The challenge was accepted and Jaialdi '90 was set in motion, generally following the model of the first one. This time, however, the Friday night show was held at the Morrison Center, and again it was a sellout; other events for the second edition were at the Old Pen. However, this was the last Jaialdi at the Old Pen; after the 1990 event, the celebration moved to a five-year rotation (1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015) and relocated to the Expo Idaho grounds.

The move after the 1990 celebration was mandated: the walls of the Old Penitentiary made for great ambiance but now the crowds did not fit!



Cydney Conger

As with any large endeavor of this kind, there was a need for seed money and volunteers. The Boise Basque Center hosts the festival with support from other Basque organizations, advertisers and sponsors. When considering all the hours of planning and implementation, "Jaialdi is not a money maker," said Dave and Jeannie Eiguren, who have been involved with the celebration from the beginning. Volunteers like the Eigurens work extra hard to produce this opportunity for others to play hard because they know how important an event like this can be for the promotion of Basque culture. Jaialdi is a success because of its volunteers, but only about half of them are Basque; non-Basque families and friends also pitch in to make Jaialdi work. A total of 880 volunteers from Jaialdi 2010 were thanked with an appreciation party the Monday after the event. What profit is made from Jaialdi goes back into the Basque Center to help pay for its facilities and cultural events.

Jaialdi is another example of the Basque ethos of "work hard, play hard." The large scope of the festival makes it one of the largest "play" opportunities in the Pacific Northwest. The crowds are immense, and as they arrive it seems like a "Basque tsunami" of sorts, one reveler noted. Local hotels and restaurants look forward to "getting wet" as all these visitors have to eat and sleep somewhere. And the larger local community has adopted Jaialdi as its own as well. The *Idaho Statesman* and TV news outlets run various features; there are events at the State Capitol and City Hall. So "becoming Basque" isn't just for Basques anymore—Jaialdi has succeeded in making Basque culture more readily accessible to many more. But it's still a core of Boise Basques and friends who band together to do the necessary work to make Jaialdi the international phenomena that it has become.

The Oinkari Chorizo Booth

One of the crown jewels of the Boise Basque community is the Oinkari Basque Dancers. From its inception in 1960, the group has regularly performed locally, but it has also traveled extensively to dance at various World's Fairs and numerous folk festivals beyond Idaho. The Oinkaris have performed internationally as far away as China and Argentina, as well as in the Basque Country itself on several occasions. But all this travel and the opportunity to "play" requires money to sustain the group. Dating back for many years, the group's largest annual fundraiser is its food booth at the Western Idaho Fair at the end of August. Originally, the group sold just *chorizo* (Basque-style pork sausage), but since then the menu offerings have expanded.

Overseeing this over the last several decades is volunteer coordinator Gerri Achurra. When people ask Gerri if she is Basque, she responds, "No, I

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Fundraising with chorizos has been a five-decade Oinkari tradition at the Western Idaho Fair. Opposite: creamy chicken-broth croquetas, a Basque staple on Grove Street.

was just smart enough to marry one.” She married Henry Achurra in 1953. They have three daughters, all of whom have been members of the Oinkari Basque Dancers. Initially she started volunteering at the “chorizo booth” in 1973 and in 1975 accepted the challenge to manage it. The booth is now one of the longest running at the Fair, moving its location along the food midway twice in a 40-year span.

Each Oinkari dancer has a certain number of shifts he or

she must cover. The dancers are responsible for arranging the work schedule as well as helping with preparations, set up, take down, cleaning and assisting customers. Gerri says she is convinced that dancers who get involved in Oinkari fundraising learn how to go on in life to a high level. “If you were to follow the history of this group, think how many of them went on to be professional people, how many went on to complete college,” she said. She has observed that the “kids are friendly and relate to the public, and the public likes seeing them work.” So while the dancers themselves cover many of the tasks, Gerri’s role is to work behind the scenes, taking on tasks like ordering food, ice, soda and arranging for their delivery, plus securing a spot for their booth, tracking finances, training volunteers and overseeing the booth.

Asked if she is going to retire, Gerri responds that she will be “retiring from the hard stuff ... it’s easy as long as you have those kids.” Gerri noted that two of the satisfactions about running the chorizo booth are seeing non-Basques getting involved in selling Basque items and the dynamic of working together on a communal project. “There is a lot of satisfaction working on a team—working on something and trying to make it a reality.”

Mark Kurlansky, author of *The Basque History of the World*, poses a riddle of sorts with this statement: "The singular remarkable fact about the Basques is that they still exist." What explains this? A group and a culture numerically as small as the Basques don't usually endure. A part of the answer to this historical anomaly lies in the Basque ethos of "work hard, play hard" as illustrated in traditional Basque sports that manifest the cultural traits of strength and perseverance, in the Jaialdi Festival that has become one of the world's largest Basque "play" opportunities and in the hard work of the Oinkari Basque Dancers, who represent Basques and the state of Idaho near and far. As the laiak on the Basque Block symbolize, every generation of Basques has to join together to symbolically turn the soil. It is hard work, but many dedicated folks are affording others the possibility of "becoming Basque."



Anne Marie/Hella Basque

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Heidi Coon graduated from Boise State in fall 2013 with a BA in social science with emphases in criminal justice and sociology. She plans to attend graduate school at Boise State in a year or two.

John Yursa is a native Boisean and a Boise State graduate who was able to return and become part of Basque Studies at Boise State University as an instructor and director of the Basque Studies Consortium.

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The venerable Tree of Gernika survived the 1937 bombing that leveled the ancient city during the Spanish Civil War. Fifty years later, on his diplomatic visit to Boise, Basque President Jose Antonio Ardanza planted the oak tree's seedling on Grove.

6 Cultural LANDMARKS

by Meggan Laxalt Mackey

New York City has its Empire State Building, Seattle its Space Needle and St. Louis its Gateway Arch. Yes, every American city has its own landmarks, those prominent landscapes, buildings or sites of historic significance. Boise, however, features some that go beyond the typical photo in a Chamber of Commerce brochure. Rather, these landmarks represent the identity of a unique ethnic group: the Basque-Americans. Not necessarily treasured for their architectural grandeur, these landmarks are more importantly honored for their cultural significance. Most are simple, ordinary places that are visible testaments to old-world Basque values and traditions that have been preserved through multiple generations. In Boise, one can discover Basque boarding houses, recreational spots, cultural centers, eateries and other businesses, public art and a section of the cemetery. These places represent the heart and soul of the Basque story in America and serve as visible reminders of the cultural contributions the Basques make to the city of Boise.

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Balustrade from Leku Ona Hotel. The brick building on Grove began as the Balaustegui Boarding House and Chico Club in the 1930s.

The Basque Boarding House

Basque values begin in the home (*etxea*) and continue throughout one's life. For many Basque immigrants who traveled across an ocean to forge a new life in America, those values extended through the boarding houses because they became a "home away from home." In the West, many men worked from spring through fall as sheepherders, living a solitary existence in the high deserts and mountains. When they returned to town for the winter, the communal boarding house (*ostatua*) was a place of shared language, customs and extended "family." Basque language reverberated around the dining table amidst the clatter of dishes from a hearty evening meal. During celebrations, the lively accordion and flute (*txistu*) sounds complemented dances such as the *jota*. Boarding house proprietors served as surrogate parents, helping with language, banking and medical support. Basque

men often married women who immigrated to work as maids in the boarding houses.

The Star Rooming House and Valencia Hotel

Many boarding houses dotted Boise's streets from 1891 through 1973, with hundreds of boarders and laborers noted in the *City Directory* and other historic records. Two buildings on West Idaho Street once served as boarding houses—the Star Rooming House and the Valencia Hotel. Both buildings are near the former Church of the Good Shepherd, which served the Basque community in Boise.

Jose Uberuaga and his wife Felipa (Guarrechena) converted an 1895 building, the Star Rooming House at 512 West Idaho Street, into a boarding house in 1903. They worked hard to make boarders feel as if they were in the Basque homeland. The late Henry Alegria recalled in his memoirs that Jose wanted his boarders to play a traditional Basque handball game called *pelota*, so in 1911 he built the Pala Court (*fronton*) behind the house. Local residents also watched the Basques play games at the Star and Anduiza frontons, a subtle form of respect for this new group of immigrants.

In 1915, Francisco (Frank) and Gabina Aguirre assumed ownership of the Star. Frank also ran a shoe repair shop from the house, which earned him



La Historia de los Vascongados en el Oeste

Felipa (Guarrechena) and Jose Uberuaga ran the Star, adding an outdoor pala court.

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and his place a nickname—*Zapateros* (shoemakers). Gabina, like most wives, managed the daily business operation. By 1923, the *City Directory* listed 54 boarders, including Frank Aguirre as boarding house proprietor and shoe repairer. There is no notation, however, of Gabina, who ran the business for more than 50 men. Boarder

Basque Museum & Cultural Center



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Eustaquio Garroguerricaechevarria, who Americanized his name to Eustaquio Garro and further yet to Ed Garro, does appear in the directory. In later years, Boiseans would know Ed as a town barber and the father of Adelia Garro Simplot, founder of the Basque Museum & Cultural Center and preservationist of Basque culture in Boise. The renovation of the Star in 1973 ended 57 years of Basque boarders there.

Benito and Asuncion (Comporedondo) Yursa operated the Modern Hotel at 613½ West Idaho Street; then they built the Valencia Hotel across



Jose, Serafina, Joe and Hermenegilda Uberuaga pose on the porch at 607 Grove, 1921. Opposite: Jacobs-Uberuaga House bowling alley with ball and pins.

the street in 1941. Located between Sixth Street and Capitol Boulevard at 612 West Idaho, the Valencia was not only a boarding house, but it also featured a restaurant upstairs. The Ysursas operated the boarding house and raised their family at the Valencia until 1965. Boiseans remember Jesus Alcelay's Oñati and later Louie's Pasta and Pizza restaurants at this same location.

The Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga House

In 1864, when Grove Street was called Market Street, the city's fabric was just beginning to come together. That year, Cyrus Jacobs hauled materials from Walla Walla, Washington Territory, to build a small home for his wife, Mary Ellen, at 607 Market Street. Eventually, the house filled with children, music and friends. Market Street became Grove Street and the Jacobs' little home grew to be a community gathering spot where Boiseans met for business, politics and friendship. The small brick house is an architectural gem that stands proud as the city's oldest brick building, one of a few that remain from the mid-1800s.

By 1910, Basques were establishing their own identity on Grove Street. That year, a Basque immigrant couple, Simon and Josefa (Alegria) Galdos, began to operate a boarding house in the former Jacobs home. In 1913, Ciriaco and Maria Cruz Bicandi assumed management of the boarding house. Eventually, they passed it along to Jose and Hermenegilda "Hilda" Uberuaga, who ran it from 1917 through 1969. Jose would wake early to

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The Jacobs-Uberuaga House earned national landmark status as a rare surviving showcase of Basque immigrant life.

start Hilda's beans and then leave for his job at the railroad. Hilda cleaned, managed daily business needs and cooked almost constantly. She grew a huge garden to support her boarders and bought customary salted cod fish, as most Basques did, from the Fifth Street Market. In an oral interview, the late Luis Arrizabala remembered the days when many Basques gathered at Uberuaga's: "Well, 'cause when we came, you automatically stayed for dinner ... you just about sat and ate with everybody else, and 'til it got, could be anywhere from 5 to 20 people in this room." After eating they would push the table against the wall to make room for dancing and music. On Sundays and special holidays, Basques gathered in droves at Uberuaga's.

Boarding houses were integral to the formation of Basque-American communities in America. Without them, it's doubtful the Basque culture would have remained so strong in Boise. By 1973, most boarders had dispersed and assimilated into the larger community. Many had married and moved into their own houses to establish their families. This cultural shift closed the doors of the Uberuaga and other boarding houses.



Tim Buckley

Grants from the E.L. Wiegand Foundation transformed the Jacobs-Uberuaga House into a teaching museum. Pictured: Jacobs-Uberuaga's wood-burning stove.

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Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com



The 600 block of Grove Street. Opposite: sidewalk sign for the Basque Museum. Next: Ward Hooper's *lajak* sculpture.

In 1983, Adelia Garro Simplot purchased the Uberuaga property to preserve it as a Basque cultural landmark. She established the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho, Inc. in November 1985. Later renamed the Basque Museum & Cultural Center, the small nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Basque culture set up operations in the Uberuaga home at 607 Grove. Eventually, the museum moved next door to the larger 611 Grove Street building. The museum embarked on an extensive historic preservation project at the Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga House under the direction of Executive Director Patty Miller and curator Jeff Johns in late 2003. Students, local citizens and educators volunteered their time to help archaeologists stitch together the past by unearthing artifacts at 607 Grove. Grants from the E. L. Wiegand and Laura Moore Cunningham foundations, along with donations from citizens and businesses, funded the restoration. Crews shored up the house's structure and retrofitted the interior with period reproduction lighting, props, wallpaper and paint to represent both the Jacobs era and the later Basque boarding house era.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of a busy city today, visitors to the Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga House can read Jacobs family letters, see family items and view a small suitcase that held an immigrant's entire belongings for a voyage to a new world. Audio recordings share memories of both the Jacobs' and Basques' experiences. One can even see the white match strikes on the house's old red brick, etched there by boarders as they stepped outside onto the porch years ago to have a smoke after one of Hilda's meals.



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Basque Museum & Cultural Center

The Basque Museum & Cultural Center is the first museum in the U.S. dedicated to Basque heritage. The museum's educational exhibits and displays, special collections, library, kitchen, gift shop and classrooms weave Basque-American identity into Boise and beyond. The museum has become one of Idaho's primary cultural institutions and has earned an international



reputation.

Basques

are defined by their language, which is essential to the preservation of cultural identity. The only Basque language immersion preschool outside the Basque Country, the *Boiseko Ikastola*, was started under the umbrella of the Basque Museum. Adult *Euskara* (Basque) language classes also are taught there. It also houses 600 oral histories; manuscripts, book and printed archives; photographs; record and tape collections; artwork and artifacts.

Tours, educational presentations and school group classes are hosted at both the museum's 611 Grove Street building and the Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga boarding house.

Adelia Simplot's vision to save the Uberuaga house and other historic structures on the Basque Block and to establish the Basque Museum & Cultural Center has allowed generations of Basque-Americans to have a place to learn, celebrate and share their legacy. This landmark of Basque culture is a gathering place for locals and visitors, where all can participate in Basque activities and learn about the unique heritage of the Basques.

The Basque Block

Intersecting Capitol Boulevard, Grove Street is a pedestrian-friendly marketplace lined with trees and old brick buildings. It's clear that this street is reminiscent of days gone by, but it's not a typical historic block. It is Boise's Basque Block, the only such district in the United States dedicated to Basque culture. The block is steeped in traditional Basque symbolism, including Basque flags. *Lauburus*, red and green pinwheel symbols of Basque identity, are embedded in the street. Visitors can experience Basque food, dance, music and games as authentic as if they were in the Basque Country. The spirit of the old Basque *auzoa* (neighborhood) is reflected in the Basque Block, which has expanded beyond the Basque-American experience to become a greater Boise gathering place. In many ways, the block has helped shape the identity of Boise itself.

Boise State University Basque historian John Ysursa refers to the values that Basques brought to America as "invisible cargo." The Basque Block represents a strong work ethic and dedication to community. Pelota games are still played at Anduiza's fronton, demonstrating the Basque love of recreation. Bar Gernika, Leku Ona and the Basque Market are reminders that food and drink are important communal experiences in the Basque culture. Visitors can hear Euskara spoken at the Basque Center, and Basque festivals such as Jaialdi, San Inazio and the Shepherders' Ball merge old customs of dance and music with new generations. The Basque Museum & Cultural Center's educational exhibits, language classes, tours and events, such as the annual Basque Museum WineFest, share Basques' pride of culture with anyone who wishes to learn.

Laiak Sculptures

Two colorful 16-foot-tall metal sculptures welcome visitors to the Basque Block at the Capitol Boulevard and Grove Street entrance. The immense pieces of art represent oversized ancient farm implements called *laiak*. The interpretive sign text on the pieces is in English and Euskara, translated by Boise State Basque language professor Nere Lete. These signs marked the first time Euskara appeared publicly in Boise. Huge red, white, green and blue ribbons atop each *laia* symbolize the seven Basque provinces: four in Spain on the south side of Grove and three in France on the north side. The large stone bases that support the sculptures signify the stonework that many Basques carved at the local Table Rock quarry. One large oak leaf

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City of Boise



Granite blocks set into the sidewalk feature symbols, surnames and songs. Opposite: Gernika commemorative medal in the Basque Museum's collection.

floats on the stone, symbolizing the Basque oak tree. Celebratory and somber, the *laiak* sculptures represent the strength of the Basque people in both sheer magnitude and symbol. In 1999, after the tragic loss of Pat and Eloise Bieter, the Boise City Arts Commission dedicated the art pieces in honor of the two leaders in the Basque community.

Sidewalk Features and Interpretive Signs

Boise's Lasting Legacy Project dedicated funds for public art when the Basque Block was formed in 2000. A series of signs resulted, marking each historic building on the block and providing information about their histories and their Basque connections. A colorful piece of artwork on the Basque Museum facade pays tribute to Basque shepherders in the West, many of whom left a visual record of their culture through carvings on aspen trees (*arborglyphs*).

Patty Miller of the Basque Museum recalled that when the block was being created, then-museum board member Ed Groff introduced the idea of placing “something that would last, made of granite” into the sidewalk. The result: 22 blocks, each weighing 400 pounds, were inset into the concrete sidewalks. Each granite piece is unique. Six feature provincial coats of arms, four include traditional songs and 12 blocks are inscribed with 500 Basque surnames in spiral shapes.

Miller remembers a Humanitarian Bowl pep rally on the Basque Block one December. Five or six band members stood around the *Pintto Pintto* song inscribed in one of the granite stones. The song about a little dog is one of the first learned by children. She recalled the group of musicians “began slowly, reading the music and playing a trumpet, trombone, bass and other instruments. By the time I made it across the street, they were playing it with pep-band flare!”

The public art on the Basque Block paints a picture of a culture that has been preserved with great respect and pride. Most important, many individuals, Basque and non-Basque, worked to create this unique cultural district in Boise. The collective effort upholds one of the Basque’s central values: community. There is a Basque saying, “*Indarrak biltruk obro doke ezik barriatruk,*” meaning, “The sum of the strengths is greater than each individually.”



Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Tree of Gernika

Gernikako Arbola de bedeinkatua,
The Tree of Gernika is blessed,

Euzkaldunen artian guztiz maitatua,
And between all the Basques loved,

Eman ta zabal zazu munduan frutua,
Give us and spread in the world your fruits,

Adoratzen zaitugu arbola santua.
We adore you holy tree.

J.M. Iparraguirre,
19th century songwriter from the province of Gipuzkoa

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The Basque panoramic mural, richly symbolic, faces Capitol Boulevard near Grove. Pictured: Oinkari mural detail.

Historically, the Basque Assembly (*Batzarrea*) ruled democratically by gathering village representatives under a sacred oak tree in the town of Gernika. Also at that spot, the King of Castile, once the lord of Bizkaia, swore to preserve the provincial laws of the Basques. Today, the *Gernikako Arbola* (the Oak Tree of Gernika) still stands in Gernika at the Assembly building.

In their book *An Enduring Legacy*, John and Mark Bieter explain that the Tree of Gernika is the most significant symbol of Basque identity and democracy. This revered Basque symbol of freedom is honored through song, dance and legend. John Bieter called it the "Basque Liberty Bell." Boise Basques have literally transplanted this sacred oak, linking old and modern Basque values. In 1981, a Basque delegation joined Idaho's Gov. John Evans to plant an oak sapling at the Statehouse lawn as a friendship symbol between the two countries. Later in March 1988, Jose Antonio Ardantza, President (*Lehendakari*) of the Autonomous Government of the Basque Country, and his wife joined a large gathering of Basques from Euzkadi and

Idaho to plant an oak sapling from the Tree of Gernika at 607 West Grove Street. The symbolic planting was a powerful moment for Basque-Americans in Boise. Today, a healthy oak tree spreads wide, marking the center of the Basque Block and serving as a tribute to the ancient gatherings in the Basque Country that marked autonomy and freedom.

Basque Mural

A large painted mural hangs adjacent to the Bar Gernika Basque Pub and Eatery on Capitol Boulevard. The art is the creation of Boise artist Noel Weber and an international group of sign painters called the Letterheads. Bill Hueg, the Letterheads' leader and noted muralist, visited Boise in 2000 to gather interesting subject matter for three murals that would be painted as part of their 25th conference. Hueg accompanied Jose Luis Arrieta, the foreman of the Highland Sheep Company, to witness sheepherding in Idaho and to learn about the Basques.

The Letterheads' public art piece visually celebrates Basque history, drawing the observer into a panoramic mural that traces the Basques' journey from Euskadi to Boise. The colorful piece highlights the evolution from old-world Basques into new-world Basque-Americans, beginning with Basque explorers, seafarers and merchants and ending with modern-day Boise cultural leaders. A *baserri* (Basque farmhouse) that is nestled in a Pyrenees landscape is juxtaposed with a western American sheep camp. Picasso's *Gernika* painting symbolizes the horrific bombing of the Basque town of Gernika, and the Tree of Gernika is placed strategically near Boise's Star Boarding House. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea, the "mother" of Boise's Basque dancers, appears behind Boise's world-renowned Oinkari troupe, and Boise's Basque musical giant, Jimmy Jausoro, smiles with his accordion. St. John's Cathedral represents Basque faith, and weightlifter Jose Luis Arrieta signifies the Basque love of sports and recreation. This piece of public art provides the viewer with a full picture of the Basque journey through time and place, and is a tribute to the shaping of Basque-American identity in Nevada and Idaho.

Morris Hill Cemetery's Basque Section

Bicandi. Uberuaga. Garmendia. Those and many more Basque names grace the headstones in Boise's Morris Hill Cemetery. The Basque section at Morris Hill reveals hundreds of first-generation Basques who were born in

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The Basque section at Boise's Morris Hill Cemetery includes hundreds of headstones from first-generation Basques. In the 1990s, volunteers used cemetery records to mark 60 Basque graves.

another country and built new lives far away from their homeland. Their final resting places are in America, not Euskadi. Second, third and even fourth generations also rest here among their fellow Basques.

At one time a number of Basque cemetery plots were unmarked. Boise Basque Liz Hardesty spearheaded a project to match death records and burial sites so that Basques could be properly honored in their final resting places. Through the hard work of Liz and the volunteers she assembled, they identified more than 60 “lost” names and more than 60 graves. Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa paid for all of the markers and a monument to honor the Basques. The granite stone, topped with the Basque lauburu symbol, is inscribed: “With respect and pride, we honor the memories of our Basque ancestors in this sacred place. You are not forgotten ...”

Conclusion

These places are special because they are visible testaments to the Basque-American experience in the West. The generation that bravely separated from their natal families and homeland laid a foundation of old-world cultural values and traditions for successive generations to build upon in America. As Boise has grown in population, diversity and complexity, the Basques have been assimilated into a larger culture. But a distinct Basque-American identity remains strong. This identity has deeply influenced the history of Boise and will ensure that the Basques’ unique culture is preserved and perpetuated for years to come.

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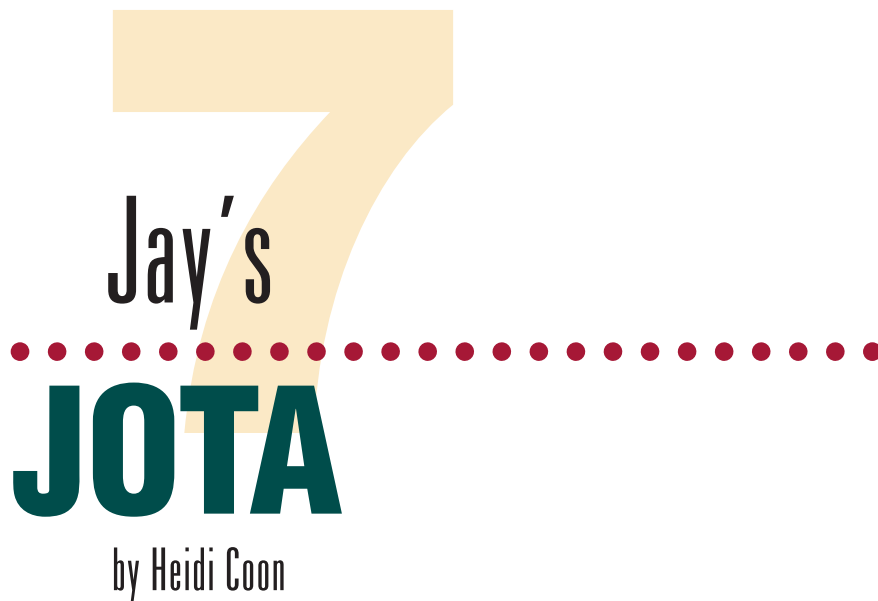
Meggan Laxalt Mackey, a French-Basque, has worked in federal public service for more than 20 years in Idaho. She holds a bachelor’s degree in history from Boise State, with emphases in public history and publications.

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Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com



Basque dance remains a folk museum of traditions nearly forgotten in neighboring Europe. Pictured: youngsters at Jaialdi, Boise, 2010.



Jay's
JOTA
by Heidi Coon

Young couples crowded the dance floor at the 1936 Shepherders' Ball as music filled the air with tunes from their homeland. But something was missing for Juanita "Jay" Uberuaga. The dancers, try as they might, didn't know the steps to the traditional Basque dances like the *jota* and *porrusalda*. She explained to her friends how sloppy the dancers were and how disappointed she was that their parents had not taught them how to dance properly. She even confronted some sheepherders who were incorporating "western American elements" into traditional Basque dances. The men challenged her to teach them the correct dances. Years later, Jay accepted the challenge. And by so doing, she began a transformation of the Boise Basque community. Her dance lessons provided a valuable metaphorical sense of glue—a community that learned to dance together would continue to stay together.

Today, as in the past, traditional folk dancing is a cornerstone of Basque culture, bringing all ages together to celebrate their heritage. It

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A dance troupe from San Sebastian honors the bravery of Basque women during the Spanish Civil War, 2012. Opposite: Basque-themed Music Week, a Jay Hormaechea production, 1949.

hasn't always been that way. In the 1930s, many second- and third-generation Basques left their parents' and grandparents' culture behind to become part of the more generic American culture. Basque folk dancing was quietly fading away. But the hard work and dedication of Jay Hormaechea (she married Boise's Rufino Hormaechea in 1956) and others like her preserved the old-country art form that now thrives in the Boiseko Gazteak, the Oinkari Basque Dancers and other groups.

With her initial class in 1948, Jay became the first person to teach formal Basque dancing lessons in the Boise area. By instructing thousands of students until she died in 1997, Jay preserved a once-precarious niche in Basque culture and instilled in her students a pride in their Basque heritage, inspiring them to keep the traditions alive and pass them from generation to generation. Her legacy is on display on Tuesday evenings when dozens of young dancers gather for lessons at the Basque Block.



Basques have been referred to as a 'living museum' because even though their neighbors in Europe once had very similar traditions at one time, the Basques kept theirs alive. There's an incredible diversity to Basque folk dance. Often, specific dances from a particular town or region have their own music, steps and distinct costumes. Depending on how they are counted, there are approximately 400 distinct Basque folk dances, each with its own story and significance. Such a variety of Basque folk dances demonstrates the Basques' deep love of dance.

What is a Basque dance about? The answer begins at a different time and place. Generally, Basque folk dances have derived from a context or foundation that includes three key elements:

Rural-Agrarian—Today many people live in urban areas, which is a more recent development in human history. Most dances came from a world well before asphalt streets and concrete high-rises. They were created by people primarily from a rural and agrarian background.

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Boise-born Juanita "Jay" Uberuaga Hormaechea understood the power of dance as a birthright and cultural bond. Opposite: Basque Abarkak dancing shoes.

Communal Emphasis—One of the biggest revolutions of modern times is the shift in emphasis from the community to the individual. Pre-modern, traditional societies always accentuated the importance and supremacy of the community. That is reflected in many dances; solos are rare, while dancing together in unison is the norm.

Ritual-Social Distinction—There are many ways of categorizing Basque folk dances. One general way is to divide dances along the lines of ritual (religious) and social (recreational). The majority of traditional folk dances are ritual in origin, and most all of those were initially reserved for men.

While most Basque folk dances can be traced back across centuries, some are more recent in origin, including what has essentially become the de facto national Basque dances: the *fandango/jota* and *arin-arin/porrusalda*. The *fandango* and *jota* are similar, but vary in that the former has four distinct parts while the latter has three based on the music; the same distinction applies to the *arin-arin/porrusalda*. No Basque gathering with dancing is complete without these popular numbers. The Basques borrowed the *fandango/jota* from Spain's Aragon region, which lies below *Euskal Herria* (the Basque Country). With their love of dance, the Basques adopted it and made it their own. The *jota* and the accompanying *porrusalda* became the central elements of Jay's dance lessons.

Jay was born in 1908 to immigrant parents who ran a boarding house at 211 South Sixth Street. She learned the traditional dances, including the *jota* and *porrusalda*, as a young girl, practicing the art form during the Saturday dances held in the local boarding houses. As a young woman, she performed traditional Basque dances for organizations such as the Boise Elks Lodge and at police balls and charity events. By the mid-1930s, Jay became concerned that the culture she was so proud of was disappearing. A 1939 newspaper article saved in her scrapbook reinforced her concerns about the loss of the traditional Basque ways: "American influences are transforming



worldcostumedolls.com

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Dancing with willow hoops gathered from the Boise River, about 1962. Opposite: plastic dolls in handmade clothing are among the tens of thousands of historical records and items in the Basque Museum & Cultural Center's collection.

the Basque and within another generation or two ... as soon as the Basque Pioneers pass on ... the Basque individuality will be gone. The Basques will have almost been completely absorbed."

But Jay proved the article wrong, one dance step at a time. When she began teaching in 1948, she found a willing clientele eager to learn the

dances of their homeland. Lessons for 50 cents each were held for two to three hours on Sunday evenings at the VFW Hall. Soon, her students, or her “kids” as she liked to call them, grew from 18 to 40 dancers. In a newspaper interview she told the reporter, “The kids don’t miss a single time after they first come ... I have to tell them to go home; that’s how thrilled they are.”

Students in Jay’s first classes, taught in a ballroom in Boise’s Hyde Park neighborhood, ranged from teenagers to adults in their early 30s. Espe Alegria and Jay’s two sisters, Marie Alegria and Petra Cengotita, assisted with the instruction. Her classes featured live traditional music played by Jimmy Jausoro on accordion and Domingo Ansotegui on tambourine. There was no single Basque version of the jota; it was a borrowed dance since many of the Basque neighbors throughout Western Europe had their own variations. But for the purposes of basic instruction, one standard had to be adopted. So when they dance the jota and porrusalda today in the Boise Basque community, many are repeating the particular step arrangements set in place generations ago: it’s pretty much the “Jay Hormaechea Jota.”

The revival of traditional dancing not only preserved a piece of Basque culture, but it also provided a way for the Basques to connect to the larger Boise community—and for the general community to relate to the Basques. The 1949 Boise Music Week provides an early example of how “becoming Basque” is a two-way street, with Basques themselves choosing to stay connected to the ethnic heritage and non-Basques choosing to embrace their neighbors as part of their community. The annual Music Week’s planning board suggested that the Basques stage a “fiesta night” to showcase their culture. Jay chaired the event, which involved 200 Basques in the production. Called “Song of the Basque,” the show featured Basque music, song and dance in traditional attire. The May 9, 1949, performance at the 2,000-seat Boise High School auditorium was packed, with an estimated 3,000 disappointed patrons turned away. The Euzkaldunak organization offered another performance so more in the community could see it. Again,



Phil Yribar

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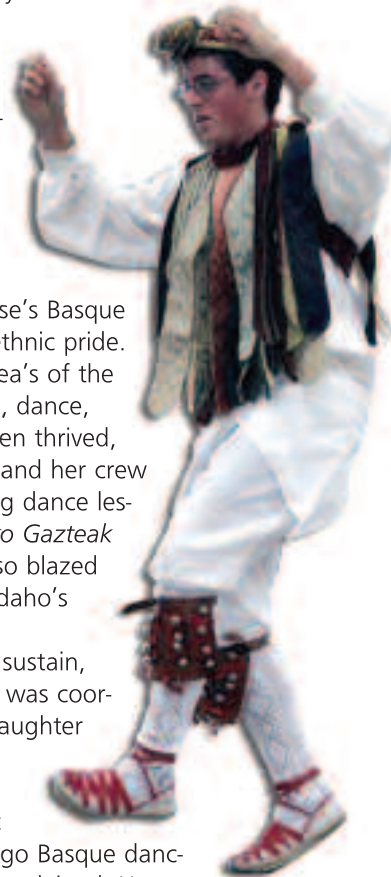
Oinkari dancers perform at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Opposite: dancing at Jaialdi, 2010.

the auditorium filled to beyond capacity. Even the dress rehearsal drew a crowd of 1,000.

The newspapers of the day sang the praises of the “Song of the Basque” performance and Jay received many letters of congratulations from people throughout the community. One person wrote: “You and your group have given Music Week another night that will be remembered for more years as one of the few really outstanding achievements of our history. The whole performance carried out a note of sincere beauty that is impossible to describe. All of you should be very proud.” Jay received requests for newspaper clippings from Basque organizations all over the U.S. The next year she staged a similar Music Week program, only held outdoors, that drew an audience of 5,000.

The Music Week experience in a very real sense introduced the Basques to their community neighbors. While the language was not readily understood, the dancing needed no real translation. Basque dance then and now remains one of the easiest means of accessing Basque culture for Basque and non-Basque alike. Consequently, over the ensuing years, Boise’s Basque community developed a strong sense of ethnic pride. Buoyed by the work of the Jay Hormaechea’s of the Boise Basque world, Basque culture—song, dance, language, food and customs—survived, even thrived, in the ensuing decades. Not only had Jay and her crew established the foundation for the ongoing dance lessons that today go by the name of *Boiseko Gazteak* (the young Basques of Boise), but they also blazed the trail for the Oinkari Basque Dancers, Idaho’s Basque dance ambassadors.

What Jay started required others to sustain, and for many years—nearly 40—the group was coordinated by Gina Ansotegui Urquidi. The daughter of Domingo Ansotegui, who was part of Boise’s Basque musical duo with Jimmy Jausoro, Gina grew up with Basque music and dance. “If you could walk, you could go Basque dancing. For us, it was just a way of life,” she explained. Her passion for dance helped keep the culture alive as she and other volunteers continued to teach children. Today, the Boiseko Gazteak



Bob Minton/Flickr

part of Basque-American heritage. More than 800 dancers have performed not only in Boise or Idaho but also throughout the United States at Basque and non-Basque venues alike. They have also traveled to perform in the Basque Country on several occasions, as well as in countries of the worldwide Basque diaspora. They've even performed in China as guests of the Basque government, illustrating the global expansion and retention of Basque ethnic heritage.

During a 1948 interview, Jay talked about how the older Basques were apprehensive about her teaching traditional dancing. Eventually, given enough time and positive results, the apprehension changed to support. The classes brought parents together as they socialized while waiting for their children. These social ties contributed to the push to create a formal social organization known as Euzkaldunak that went on to build the Boise Basque Center. Dance helped to bring Basque people together, and Basque dance still plays that same role in perpetuating Basque identity in the Boise Basque community. At the same time, dance has also served to meld Basques with the larger Boise community. Basque folk dance is a visible, dynamic and easily accessible form of Basque culture that is engaging for Basques and non-Basque alike. It will remain a central element in "becoming Basque," just as Jay hoped for more than 65 years ago.



Future mayor David H. Bieter of Boise, a third-generation Basque and an Oinkari dancer, poses at the Boise Depot, 1975. Opposite: songs from the 1949 pageant.

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Heidi Coon graduated from Boise State in fall 2013 with a bachelor's degree in social science with emphases in criminal justice and sociology. She plans to attend graduate school at Boise State in a year or two.

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Jausoro family



Accordion legend Jimmy Jausoro (1920-2004) became Idaho's iconic ambassador of the Basque folk tradition.



Play it,
JIMMY
by Carolyn Groom

His bicycle wobbles as he struggles to keep the package from hitting the front wheel. Thirteen-year-old Jimmy Jausoro pushes the pedals faster, knowing his destination is not too far. He is going to his piano accordion lesson, carrying the precious instrument on his bike. His accordions will later become valuable tools of the trade as he performed, taught and preserved Basque music over a 50-year career. He passed away in 2004, but Jimmy remains an icon in the Treasure Valley. Who could have imagined that the boy pedaling to those first lessons in Nampa would later preserve Basque music for future generations and leave a legacy of musicians who continue to play his music today?

Jake Murgoitio's grandmother drove him to music lessons on Fridays in late 2002 and early 2003 to take Basque accordion lessons from the master—Jimmy himself. "He was a very good teacher of life, willing to give the shirt off his back," Jake said. "He was a very caring person. I don't know anyone who had a negative story about him. If there was ever a perform-

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ance, if there was a student to teach, he was there. I was fortunate to have had the time with him that I did." Those lessons were filled with gentleness, Jake, now a pre-med student, reminisced. "We would go over and over theory as well as music. I had no musical knowledge and he took me from there to where I am now." Many musicians throughout southern Idaho can recite similar stories about Jimmy's influence.

Born in Nampa in 1920, Jimmy learned early to help his family by greeting



Idaho State Historical Society

Jimmy, age 15 in 1935, was already a featured attraction in Nampa's boarding houses. Pictured: downtown Nampa, 1930s. Opposite: a vintage postcard, about 1940.

Basque sheepherders at the railroad station and bringing them to the family business, the Spanish Hotel. His father, Tomas Jausoro, emigrated from the Basque Country shortly before WWI and purchased the property after working in the Silver City mines.

Attracting boarders was a fine art. Jimmy helped patrons by eagerly seizing their bags—often their only possessions—and stacking them onto his little wagon. Tired from arduous months trailing sheep through the intermountain desert and flush with a season's pay, the men were eager for the comforts of a bed, bath and home cooking. Although shy and small, Jimmy learned quickly to charm the lonely sheepherders and lead them past the competing boarding houses to their new "home" on Nampa's Twelfth



Avenue.

Like other young boarding house children, Jimmy spent much of his time helping around the home and in the family business. His dearest interest, however, turned toward music. In an era before television, many boarding families and their tenants played musical instruments in the evenings to create their own entertainment. Gathering in the front room, they enjoyed each other's musical talents and company. These sounds of the Old Country served both to entertain and to attract homesick young men who missed their own families. A great deal of socializing occurred among the houses, so Jimmy met many musicians every season.

After school, Jimmy took care of the chickens, rabbits and goat, while his brother Joe took care of the cow. All the Jausoro children—three brothers and two sisters—shared in the household chores. Their neighborhood, near church row along the present-day Twelfth Avenue commercial area, was mostly Basque. So Jimmy grew up hearing the language, although he didn't speak it as well as some of his friends. "Typically, my parents spoke very good English, but they spoke Basque with each other," he said in a 1991 interview. "My dad was from Gipuzkoa (northwestern Spain) and my mother was from Ereño (Bizkaia, northern Spain). They would speak to us in Basque and we would answer in English. They did encourage us to speak English, but we spoke English and Basque at home with the family and the guests," he said.

He made lifelong friends in the neighborhood. "Domingo Ansotegui lived across the street and that's where I first met him. He herded sheep with my brother Joe for the Andy Little Sheep Company." As adults, the two

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Jimmy Jausoro's Orchestra, founded in 1957, played dance music for more than 40 years. Opposite: One of Jimmy's accordions.

partnered in various musical adventures. Jimmy's mother, Tomasa Mallea, taught her musically talented children Spanish songs. "Louie, Lola and Tony were in the glee club, and Maria often got parts in musicals," Jimmy said of his siblings. "The *trikitixa* (button accordion) songs had to be metered and I would try to repeat them. We didn't have many songs other than in Spanish," he said. Many of the Basque songs lived only by oral tradition, so over the years Jimmy worked tirelessly to record pieces for the very first time ... and thus save them for posterity. Listening to the shepherders playing their guitars and accordions created some wonderful memories for him. "Louie Barnes let me play his accordion, and I listened to John Urlezaga and Vic Arego from Boise. I learned from Vic Arego and really idolized him," he said. Arego played accordion at all the picnics in the 1930s.

A friend's aunt allowed the boys to play the button accordions stored at her house while the shepherders were in the field. But Jimmy really needed his own instrument. He earned his money through delivering papers and doing odd chores. When he was 13, he wandered by a slot machine in his parents' hotel and secretly put a coin in the slot. He hit a jackpot, just what he needed to help finance the new accordion. "I bought the accordion from Charlie Johnson at the Samson Music Company, where Basque pianist Lola Mendiguren worked," he explained. "My first accordion was a brand new chromatic piano accordion that I paid \$120 for. [It would cost \$2,150 today.] It was a shiny new Hohner, with mother of pearl buttons." Soon the young boy carrying a large, awkward package could be seen bicycling along the streets in Nampa at least once a week. "I rode my bike to my lesson carrying my accordion in one hand and steering with the other," he said. He wasn't able to take many classes but he soaked in everything he could from boarders and other musicians.



He was recognized at an early age for his talent. People going by his home heard him play and encouraged him to expand his abilities and show others what he could do. When he was 15 he entered a contest sponsored by the *Idaho Free Press* and Lloyd's Lumber Company in Nampa. Called *Amateur Hour* and broadcast over the radio, Jimmy competed against other people who had different talents. He won, he said, because it was judged by the amount of handclaps from the audience. The performer who moved a sound meter to the highest level was the winner. Since the contest was held in the Adelaide Theater in Nampa, Jimmy had a slight advantage over the other six or seven contestants. "I knew every kid in that theater who clapped for me," he said. Once he won locally, he boarded a bus for Portland, where

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Jimmy, with student Patrick Williams, was instrumental in the Boise revival of folk music and dance. Opposite: Oinkari dancer Sean Aucutt.

he toured the KGEW studio, enjoyed a nice dinner and stayed in the New Heathland Hotel. The Oregon press wrote about his radio appearance: “Shy, small, Jimmy Jausoro, 15-year-old amateur contest winner, had his ‘big moment’ on the air, was interviewed and got a chance to play his accordion, an accordion almost as big as himself, and an accordion that he has worked months selling newspapers for the *Boise Capital News* to buy. He said he was a little scared, but he liked it.”

Young Jimmy and his accordion became a fixture at Basque events in the 1930s and ‘40s. His prized instrument went with him when he joined the Navy during WWII, serving in the South Pacific as a ship’s clerk aboard the destroyer *USS Bexar*. He played mostly popular music for his fellow



sailors. He returned to Boise in 1946, where he worked for the Union Pacific railroad as a switchman. He spent his days assembling trains and switching cars in the railway yard, but when he wasn't working he continued to play his music. With Jimmy on his accordion and his boyhood friend

Domingo Ansotegui on tambourine, along with other musicians, they played for Basque dances in Boise, Shoshone, Gooding and many other communities in Idaho, as well as in

Elko, Winnemucca and Ely, Nevada. They were young and energetic. They

got paid only a pittance and played all night long. Often they put together pieces by ear, explained Dan Ansotegui, Domingo's son. In November 1957, he formed the Jim Jausoro Orchestra, which continued to play both Basque and modern dance music until 2000. Musical gigs kept them busy. "Music livens you up!" became his mantra.

Wanting to include more traditional Basque music in his repertoire, he continued to write and rewrite music. "When I got started, there was no written music to follow," he explained. Although friends didn't find sheet music when they visited Gernika in 1960, he later made contacts who gave him some direction. "There was a guy in Gernika who wrote out a little for me; it was a lot easier when tapes (cassette) came out," he added. And when the tapes weren't available, someone would just hum the music and he would figure out the

by Pollux (Paul Morris)



A Picassoesque trikitixa player. Opposite: Gary Larson's accordion music in hell.

notes from that.

This was the method he used to help the newly formed Oinkari Basque Dancers put their programs together in the 1960s. His friend Domingo was always at his side. The two were crucial in preserving and playing traditional Basque dance music, and filled key roles in the growing popularity of the Oinkari troupe as it became a trademark of the Idaho Basque community.

"When the Oinkari Basque Dancers got going in 1960,

they'd hum the dances to me and I'd write down all of the dancers' music," Jimmy said. Some of the music he recreated then, such as *makil dantza*, *aurreskua*, *txankarrekua* and *jota barri*, remain with the group today. He travelled extensively with the Oinkaris up to the 1990s. He even appeared in a

Walt Disney movie, *Greta, the Misfit Greyhound*, a story about a Basque sheepherder who befriended a racetrack dog.

"We just had to ask him and Jimmy would play. He was so gung ho!" said Al Erquiaga, one of the early Oinkari dancers. "We would ask for a donation, but I don't think Jimmy or Domingo ever took any money from the pot," explained Diana Urresti Sabala, another Basque dancer from that era. When a second musician could not make the trip to the New York World's Fair in 1964, Jimmy stepped in and played the music for those dances too. "Once again he was willing to drop everything and play for the dance group. Jimmy learned all the dance numbers. We spent the day in the basement of a church practicing and the next day we went to the World's Fair," Al said.

"That man had the biggest heart to give his time for his music. We asked him to come down, sometimes unreasonably often. I don't think he ever turned us down unless he had a previous commitment. We considered him part of our dance group," Al explained. "I think of not only Jim's commitment to all of us in the Basque culture, but I also remember his patience," added Diana. "We would say, 'Hey Jim, would you play that one more time? Okay, stop-stop. Jim, would you play that one more time?' He was so very patient, so kind and so willing." Jimmy had a little trademark hand motion to indicate when to start from the top of a song. "He'd cup his hand and raise it above his head, bringing it forward and down to show he was going to start at the beginning," demonstrated Boise State University professor John Yursa. "He'd do that over and over, never complaining."

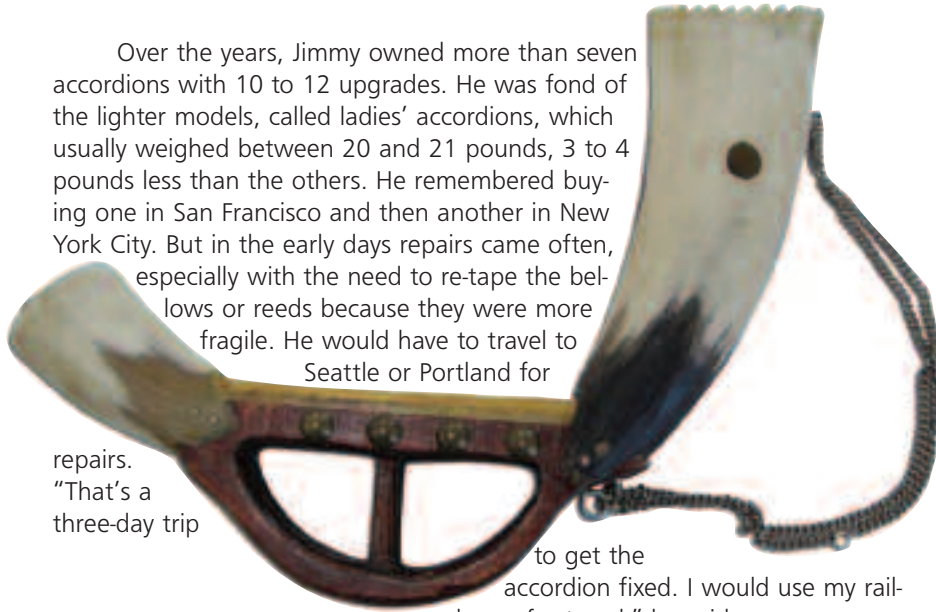


The Far Side

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Over the years, Jimmy owned more than seven accordions with 10 to 12 upgrades. He was fond of the lighter models, called ladies' accordions, which usually weighed between 20 and 21 pounds, 3 to 4 pounds less than the others. He remembered buying one in San Francisco and then another in New York City. But in the early days repairs came often, especially with the need to re-tape the bellows or reeds because they were more fragile. He would have to travel to Seattle or Portland for

repairs.
"That's a
three-day trip



to get the
accordion fixed. I would use my rail-
road pass for travel," he said.

Playing his accordion was a priority for Jimmy. "My mother would always jokingly say his first love was that accordion and she was second," his daughter Marie Day said. "I don't think people realize just how much my father was gone [from home] while we were growing up. If someone needed a musician, he was always there, and he had practices almost every night of the week," she added. "My first memory of my grandfather was when I was learning how to dance the jota," explained his granddaughter, Danielle Day. "When I was little, I had just learned to do the jota. I would be tired, but he would be ready, waiting for me. I remember most of the time he would have his accordion with him. I remember looking forward to getting into the older dance group because that was the one my *aitona* (grandfather) would play for," Danielle said. Marie remembered Jimmy being interested in the music his granddaughter was singing for him. He realized he did not know the piece himself. "He went down to the sidewalk on the Basque Block where they had imprinted the piece and sat next to it, copying it note for note so that he could play it for her," Marie said.

Although his daughters Marie and Anita tried to play the accordion, neither took the same liking to it as their father. Instead they became committed to the Oinkari dance troupe. They would see their father's patience first-hand as the group practiced over and over again, starting from the top to get the steps right.



Medieval rhythms echo through Boise's Basque music revival. Pictured: banging the txalaparta. Opposite: the alboka, a single-reed hornpipe.

Ensuring that traditional Basque music lived on in the hearts of young people was a priority for Jimmy. He played for the North American Basque Association's summer camps that brought Basque music and dance to students. His wife, Isabel, coordinated the first one, held in Boise in 1973. Now, the camp is held annually in different locations, alternating between Southern California, San Francisco, Elko and Boise, for example. The camps continue to stimulate new interest and provide instruction to youngsters eager to learn more about their musical heritage.

Jimmy received national and international recognition for his contributions as a musician and teacher of Basque music. In 1985, the National Endowment for the Arts recognized Jimmy and the Oinkari dancers with the Heritage Cultural Award for preserving Basque culture in folk art. His other honors include an Idaho State Folk Arts Award, the Boise Mayor's Award for

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www.folmusica.com
Accordionist Kepa Junkera of Bilbao, a Grammy winner, performed in Boise in 2010. Opposite: souvenir figurine.

Excellence in the Arts, an America Hall of Fame Award from the Society of Basque Studies in America, Basque of the Year by the North American Basque Organization and the Idaho Governor's Award for the Arts for Lifetime Achievement.

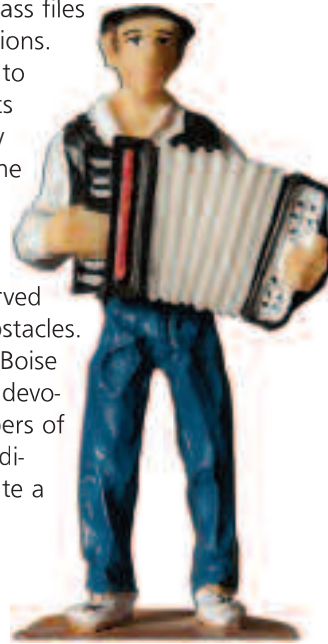
But his biggest prize can be seen in the young musicians who are now playing the instrument that he loved so dearly. Accordion classes at the Basque Center continually draw new students. Dan Ansotegui once played with Jimmy. Now he leads Txantxangorriak, a local music school Jimmy had a hand in starting. The regular accordion class has 14 students ranging in age from 8 to 70. Another eight students are learning to play the tambourine.

Novice accordionist Alexis, 17, raises her trikitixa, familiarizing herself with the weight, pulling and pushing, trying to get a steady sound. Weighing approximately 20 pounds, it hangs awkwardly on the strap around her neck. She is learning one of the most beloved musical instruments of the Basque people, the button accordion. Alexis is Basque and her parents want to pass on their love for the Basque culture in hopes that she in turn will pass on that heritage to her children and grandchildren. Although the first

few notes are a little tentative, the class progresses and Alexis improves throughout the lesson, the music sounding more melodic each time through.

As Alexis finishes up her lessons, the next class files in, gathering metal chairs, unpacking their accordions. She is invited by instructor Dan Ansotegui to stay to accompany the group on their first piece. Students tune their instruments, filling the room with many different musical patterns all at once. And once the class is over, the dancers arrive.

Although she never met him, Alexis benefits from the rich heritage left by an unassuming railway worker named Jimmy Jausoro, who preserved the music of his Basque heritage despite many obstacles. Basque music continues to be played throughout Boise and the surrounding areas because of one man's devotion. His legacy can be seen in the growing numbers of today's young people who to continue to play traditional Basque music and instruments—and celebrate a land that many of them may never see.



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Carolyn Groom is a writer and researcher interested in oral histories and traveling. She has a passion to learn about different cultures, then revealing her knowledge in unique ways to bring a new awareness to students of all ages.

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Allan Ansell



Paella for 200 simmers with seafood and chorizos at the Basque Market on Grove Street, 2013.



Food and
FAMILY

by Txardio

Epifania's life on the small farm near Ibarrangelua in the Basque region of northern Spain was busy with daily chores, which included helping her mother cook for the family. But the winter of 1925 brought a surprise to the young daughter of Silbestre Lamiquiz. A young Basque man from America showed up, boasting of his job as a foreman on a sheep ranch in a far off place—Idaho. He didn't hide the fact that he was looking for a wife willing to move to America and help him on a ranch larger than many entire townships in Epi's world.

His name was David Inchausti. He was raised in a little town just over the hill from Epi's home. He dressed as fine as any man she had ever known. David could only be away from his new Idaho home near Mackay for a few months, but he had big plans. David and Epifania fell in love, and in a month they were married. He promised that within a year he would send her a ticket so she could join him in Idaho. Not long after David's arrival back in Idaho, he received a letter from his beloved wife. "The ticket you promised

me must now be for two. I am to have your child.” As it turned out, Epi and her young daughter, Maria Rosario, made it to Idaho just before the baby’s third birthday. David met his wife and daughter at the train station in Pocatello. They bumped along the dusty roads in his new Ford Model A to the Drake Ranch near Mackay. Epi’s new life included cooking for the numerous shepherders who worked for the large ranch where David was foreman.

She soon learned that the beloved olive oil, choricero peppers and fresh fish that she was accustomed to in the Basque Country were not available in Idaho. She had to adapt her cooking. And cooking for up to 30 hungry Basque men was nothing like cooking for her sisters and young brothers back home. One of the first recipes Epi adapted was the vinegar and oil dressing she used on all of her simple but tasty salads.

Epi’s Garlic Vinaigrette

- 1 clove garlic minced
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup Mazola corn oil
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tbs. sugar

Blend together the vinegar, minced garlic, salt and sugar. Drizzle the oil into the mixture as it continues to mix to allow the oil to emulsify (author’s word, not Epi’s). Toss dressing with the salad and serve immediately.

—Epifania Lamiquiz Inchausti

After another five years and two more daughters, David and Epi moved down the road to Hailey, where David opened the Gem Bar. Epi continued to fix dinners for the few boarders the Inchausti family housed. After a neighboring house of ill repute was vacated, David and Epi bought the building for the family. There was room upstairs for boarders and a large dining room where Epi served the Basques who stayed with the family, as well as up to 20 diners each night. Soon, word of her cooking skills and unique menu spread throughout the Wood River Valley. Her clientele reached beyond Basque boarders to include Sun Valley visitors, including the occasional celebrity—Bing Crosby, Clark Gable and Tony Bennett, to name a few.

Epi’s journey to Idaho was similar to many other women who married Basque men and later became cooks at boarding houses or ranches. Using traditional menus and cooking methods handed down for generations in the



Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Marie Mingo Guisasola Aberasturi, a native of Gizaburuaga, ran Bob's Café in Emmett and, later, the hot-lunch program at Boise's St. Joseph School.

Basque Country, they introduced a cuisine rooted in Old World traditions, but adapted to its new environment in the American West.

Like Epi, Flora (Churruca) Aldazabal and sisters Carmen (Pagoaga) Lete and Luisa (Pagoaga) Bilbao became boarding house/ranch cooks known for their Basque cooking. All three came to Boise in the late 1960s. Carmen and José Lete joined Flora and Juan Aldazabal in leasing the Letemendi Boarding House on Sixth and Grove streets in Boise. Flora and Carmen cooked, made beds, cleaned the boarding house, shopped and did whatever else needed to be done. Each Basque boarder paid \$90 a month for three meals a day and a bed. Although the menu did not change drastically from day to day, the food was always good, Flora said. The following is a typical weekday menu:

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Allan Ansell



Chris Ansotegui preserves Epi's traditions on Meridian's Main Street.
Opposite: Epi and David Inchausti.

Breakfast

Chorizos
Eggs
Toast
Coffee

Lunch

Red Beans
Roast Beef
Roasted Potatoes
Fresh Fruit

Dinner

Porrusalda
(Leek Soup)
Thinly cut Steak
Fried Cod Fish with
Pimientos
Fresh Fruit

Flora and Juan moved to Elko in 1964 to buy the Star Hotel, which they ran as both a boarding house and a restaurant. After their time at Letemendi's, Carmen and José moved to the Aldecoa sheep ranch outside of Boise. Luisa and her husband, Felix, lived on the Nicholson sheep ranch near Melba, where under the guidance of Mari Ursa she learned ranch-style cooking. Deer, elk and beef were on the menu, along with occasional tongue, pigs' feet, tripe and *bacalao* (salted cod fish). Basques at the ranch made their own chorizos and *morzillas* (blood sausage). With Luisa at the Nicholson ranch and Carmen at the Aldecoa ranch, several sheepherders noted that they had never been fed so well.

Like the Star in Elko, many Basque boarding houses throughout the West began serving food to the public in the 1960s to boost their bottom line as fewer and fewer Basques immigrated to work on the ranches. Although this style of restaurant never took hold in southern Idaho, the Basque restaurants of Nevada and California became well known for their family-style service. Restaurants like the Wool Growers in Bakersfield, the Winnemucca Hotel in Winnemucca and the Star in Elko became the quintessential versions of Basque restaurants in the American West.

The dining experience was similar in all of these restaurants. Many of these Basque-styled dinner houses served twice a night, so if diners missed the first hour, they needed to wait until the next serving began. While waiting, patrons might partake of Picon Punch, featuring a dark, bitter French liqueur made from oranges. Although it is not popular in the French Basque region, it has become the Basque drink of preference in Nevada and California restaurants.



Inchausti family

Picon Punch

Fill an 8 oz. stemmed glass with ice. Rub a lemon twist around the edge of the glass. Add the following ingredients:

1/4–1/2 oz. grenadine syrup

2 oz. Picon liqueur

Splash of soda

Stir slightly to mix

Float 3/4 oz. of brandy

Some bartenders insist that the stirring is done after the brandy, but then it's not a float. Your call.

Patrons were ushered into the dining room, where they found long tables set with plates, silverware, water glasses and wine goblets. The Basque dinner houses were not places for private conversation over a quiet dinner. Diners often felt they had been invited into someone's home to have

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dinner with the host family. Servers brought wine carafes, bread baskets and soup tureens to the table. Each diner served him or herself and then passed it on, just like at home. After the soup bowls were cleared, a simple but delicious salad with a garlic vinaigrette followed. Then, plate after plate came out, filled with thick Basque red beans, green beans with garlic, french fries, fried cod fish and large dinner steaks. Dessert was often an apple compote of cooked apples with cinnamon and red wine or Basque rice pudding.

Boise's introduction to Basque family-style dining came in late 1979 when Pug Ostling of the Sandpiper restaurant joined with two first-generation immigrants to establish the Boarding House. Its proprietor, Nicasio Beristain, had lived in Boise since immigrating in the 1950s and chef Ramon Zugazaga came from the Star Hotel in Elko. Serving roast lamb, lamb chops, pork chops, steaks, tri-tip roast, baked chicken and several cod and halibut dishes, they filled the house with an authentic feel and fantastic food night after night.

After the Boarding House closed in 1982, Boise was once again without a Basque restaurant. But in late 1987, Jesus Alcelay, a Basque immigrant from Oñati, opened the Oñati Restaurant in downtown Boise in the same building that was once the Valencia boarding house. Jesus wanted to change peoples' views of Basque cooking by serving side dishes such as *croquetas*, a chicken roux-filled fritter, along with authentic Basque fish dishes such as cod *oliotara*, which is baked cod with olive oil, parsley and a touch of red pepper. Over the next 16 years, Jesus initiated a new style of Basque cooking compared to that of the old boarding houses. The tasty *croquetas* that he made so famous are perhaps Jesus' greatest contribution to local Basque cuisine. As he remembers, not a single restaurant in the western U.S. served *croquetas* when the Oñati opened its doors. But he couldn't remember a single restaurant in the Basque Country that didn't serve them. Jesus also introduced *solomo*, a marinated pork loin that is sliced, grilled and served with roasted red peppers or *pimientos*. Certain essential Basque foods were very difficult to find in Boise. Leeks were nearly unknown to local food



Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com

Dan Ansotegui (above) founded the Basque Market. Owned by Tara and Tony Eiguren since 2006, the market imports cheeses and meats. Bar Gernika, founded in 1991, was Ansotegui's first venture on Grove Street.

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Allan Ansell



Epi's sautés Spanish shrimp in butter, lemon and garlic.

distributors. Pimientos were so expensive that it became difficult to serve them as often as needed. The Atlantic hake, called *merluza* in Spanish and *lebatza* in Basque, was very difficult to replace with the types of fish found in Boise. After two years in downtown Boise, the restaurant moved to the Ranch Club in Garden City. It closed in 2000 when Jesus returned to the Basque Country to open a new restaurant in his home town of Oñati.

Cod Fish ala Romana

2 lbs. fresh or frozen cod fish fillets
Salt
1 cup flour
3 eggs beat
½ cup vegetable or olive oil
5 tbsp. butter
Lemon zest from ½ lemon
Juice from ½ lemon

Slice the cod at a 45° angle in 4 oz. servings (about 8 slices). Heat the oil at a medium/low heat in a skillet. Salt the fillets. Dredge each fillet in the flour then coat with the egg. When oil is hot, gently slide the fillets into the oil. It is vital that the oil is not too hot, around 325°. The cod should cook more like a simmer than a frying. Carefully turn the fillets with a fork so as not to break the coating. Do not overcook the fish. In a double boiler, melt the butter, add the lemon zest and lemon juice. Again, the butter should not be heated too much or it will separate. Drizzle the butter-lemon combination over the fish and serve.

Serves 6–8 people.

—Jesus Alcelay

Basque food in southwestern Idaho has been on a journey for the last 100 years. Its cooks have adapted, and yet they have not abandoned the lessons of their ancestors. The result is a cuisine steeped in tradition but suited to modern tastes. Today, the Boise area includes four establishments that serve Basque fare—Leku Ona, Epi's Basque Restaurant, the Basque Market and the Bar Gernika Basque Pub and Eatery.

Jose Maria Artiach, born and raised in the Basque Country, came to the U.S. to work as a shepherd. He founded Leku Ona (Basque for "good place") in December 2005, for a couple of reasons. One, he says, was "because of my love of Basque culture," and the second was "the opportunity downtown to have a full-service Basque restaurant and bar on the corner

Debbie Geraghty



of the Basque Block.” The establishment also has an adjoining five-room boutique hotel, so in a way returning to the early *ostatua* (boarding house) tradition. The menu features some familiar American food items, but his restaurant illustrates the contrast between Basque-American cuisine and that of the European homeland. Generally, the Basque-American version derived from the boarding house context, which made use of readily available foodstuffs. Also, because of the involvement in the sheep industry for most early Basques, there is the marked emphasis on lamb items, at least in the Western states. Meanwhile, European Basque cuisine also has adapted to new conditions and influences, and one of the most significant recent transformations is the growing notoriety of what has been termed in Europe the “new Basque cuisine.” Leku Ona makes it a point to serve both Basque-American and European-Basque menu items prepared by Basque chefs.

The other three establishments—Epi’s, Bar Gernika and the Basque Market—can trace their lineage directly to Epi Inchausti’s boarding house cui-

sine in Hailey. Raised on food inspired by her recipes of two generations ago, Epi's grandchildren have carried on her culinary traditions. Dan Ansotegui, Epi's grandson, decided while spending the 1978–79 school year in the town of Oñati that he wanted to open a Basque bar and restaurant when he returned to Boise. Dan finished his degree in elementary education and taught for five years. Subsequent trips to the Basque County just reinforced his dream. Finally, he left teaching to work full time in the restaurant business. In June 1991, Dan's dream came to fruition when he opened Bar Gernika, named for the town of Gernika (Guernica in Spanish),

where many of his relatives lived. The restaurant and menu evolved over the 16 years that Dan ran the restaurant. He sold Bar Gernika to one of his long-time employees, Jeff May, in 2007, and it is still going strong today.

Dan also opened the Basque Market in 2000. Located on the Basque Block, it began as an import market with an auxiliary kitchen to make soups, croquetas and other dishes for Bar Gernika. It quickly became a popular caterer for Basque meals and Spanish paellas, as well as a deli and restaurant. Basque cooking classes are also held there. It is now owned by Tony and Tara Eiguren.



Debbie Geraghty

Benedicto "Benny" Goitiandia learned sausage making at Gem Meats in Boise. Opposite: sweet red peppers hang from rafters at Benny's home near Kuna.

Kirk Keogh www.first2lastlight.com



Making *mortizilla*, a blood sausage, has become an annual tradition in Boise.

Gernika's Basque Rice Pudding

- 2 qts. whole milk
- 1 ½ cups medium grain rice
(Spanish, Japanese and Cal Rose rices work well)
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 cups sugar

Add the milk, cinnamon sticks and rice to a thick-bottomed soup pot and heat to a medium heat. Stir often, about every two to three minutes using a wooden spoon. After about 20 minutes, the rice will start to come to a rolling boil. The boil should remain gentle or the milk will scald. After 45 minutes from the start, add the sugar. Continue cooking another 20-25 minutes until the bubbles begin to form and break

or look like those boiling mud pits from an old caveman movie. Remove from heat and ladle into individual serving bowls. Sprinkle with cinnamon powder and cover with plastic wrap. Serve cold or if you like, serve while still warm. Approximately 20 servings.

—Dan Ansotegui

Epi's legacy remains strong in a Meridian restaurant that bears her name. Granddaughter Christine Ansotegui had a drive similar to that of her brother, Dan. Chris, known by many as Kiki, spoke a great deal with her sister, Gina, about the idea. Gina catered Basque food for several years and felt like the restaurant was a natural fit. In late 1998, they opened a small home-turned-restaurant in downtown Meridian. Chris said her motivating factor to always make sure customers leave her restaurant with the same feeling that diners once had when leaving Grandma Epi's little house on Bullion Street in Hailey. Chris remembered dinner as a time when everyone could come together to share the events of each another's day. She wanted Epi's to provide that type of atmosphere for her clients.

When the early Basque immigrants first came to the United States in the early 1900s, they brought a type of food that was distinctly Basque. The recipes were not complex, but it took a lifetime to really get them right. So, when young Basques come over today, the American-Basque food often takes them by surprise. They find themselves tasting many of the same flavors they heard about being cooked in their great-grandmother's house. Basque cooking in America has taken the route that we sometimes see among displaced cultures. The cooking in many of the Basque dinner houses here is much the same as it was in the Basque Country over a century ago. The food in the Basque areas of Spain and France has evolved into an elegant cuisine that can be served side by side with the best in Europe. Basque chefs are renowned in Europe as some of the most creative and inspired in the world. But if you ask them where the roots for their cooking began, they'll all talk about the food they had around their grandmother's table. From the farms of the Old Country to the boarding houses of the West to the modern Basque restaurants of today—grandmother's table is where it all started.

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Txardio is the Basque name for this chapter's author, who remains involved in the Basque community through music and food.

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The Basque Center fills some of the cultural void left by the closure of the boarding houses. With dancing, drinking, card tournaments and festival celebrations, the Grove Street landmark remains a social-networking hub.

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Basque

CENTER

by Christine Hummer

Octogenarians socialize over a game of cards; pre-teens learn complicated dance steps; children gather to learn the ancient language of their ancestors through songs; a bride and groom kiss at their wedding reception; an internationally known dance troupe polishes its routines and somber friends and family gather to memorialize a departed loved one. All of this—and much more—is a regular part of the routine under the roof of Boise’s Basque Center, the focal point of the Basque community since it opened its doors in 1950.

The Center was born of the Basques’ need for social interaction, of their desire for a place to share, to celebrate, to simply “be Basque.” For decades, the boarding houses served as surrogate homes for new immigrants and sheepherders. By the mid-1940s, most of the permanent Basque families had left the boarding houses to establish residences throughout the Treasure Valley but still longed to stay connected to fellow Basques. They rented halls from fraternal organizations to hold their weekend dances, but

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that didn't fill the need for a central meeting place. In 1949, 500 charter members founded *Euzkaldunak* (those who speak the Basque language), a social club limited to people of Basque extraction and their families. That year, club members found an ideal location where they could build a center to meet and socialize—the corner of Sixth and Grove, on the Uberuaga boarding house garden plot in the heart of the downtown Basque neighborhood. The determined group sold \$200,000 worth of bonds in the community to purchase the lot and build the long-awaited Basque Center, one of the early efforts by a Basque community in the U.S. to build a place to carry on its cultural traditions. The first phase, finished in 1950, featured a basement meeting room, a bar and an upstairs card room. Two years later, they added the main dance hall, a basement dining hall and kitchen. The Center was funded and built from the ground up—no bank loans were needed—because of a very strong volunteer community that still thrives in the current Boise Basque culture. The Center's construction drew some opposition, mostly from boarding house owners nervous about losing clientele who would no longer attend their dances and other events.

Today, most of the Basque Center, including the bar, is open to the public, but parts of it remain a members-only social club. *Euzkaldunak* is one of the largest Basque social organizations in the U.S., with a membership of approximately 1,000 in 2014. Only about 40 of the original charter members are still living. With its Spanish Mission style, the Basque Center is a familiar architectural landmark in Boise. Its original cinder block exterior was upgraded in the 1970s to look like a Basque Country farmhouse (*baserri*) complete with white stucco exterior and red Spanish tile roof. This familiar look provides a sense of home and inclusion for the Basque community, especially for those who remember their days in the Basque Country.

The Center fosters the preservation of Basque traditions, a space for those who long for the heritage that makes the Basque culture so distinct. It is common to walk into the Basque Center and see half a dozen first- and second-generation older gentlemen taking a break from their *Mus* card game (played in the upstairs "members only" card room) to grab a coffee or a glass of red wine. Whether they go there daily or weekly, simply being at the Basque Center has become a ritual integral to their daily lives. As a social hub, it is common for local Basques to meet at the Center after work, after church or before dinner. And passersby often peek into the bar just to see who is there, or to join their friends to enjoy one of the least expensive libations in Boise.

Since opening more than 60 years ago, the Basque Center has played a key role in the lives of multiple generations. Three women spanning three



Idaho State Historical Society

A smiling hostess poses for *Statesman* photographer Leo J. "Scoop" Leeburn at the Basque Lounge on Boise's Ninth Street, 1953. The postwar bar predated the Basque Center on Grove.

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Basque Museum & Cultural Center



The Basque Center began with \$40,000 in local donations and a ten-year high-yield bond. Pictured: digging the foundation, 1950. Inset: the cinder-block building as it appeared in the 1950s and '60s.

generations—Lydia Jausoro, now deceased; daughter Juliana Aldape and granddaughter Jill Aldape—talked about the Basque Center and its role in their lives in an October 2013 interview. Lydia, who with her husband Louis were charter members, said in the early days Basques were slow to warm to the idea of the Center. “They weren’t drawn to it at first. A lot of them weren’t for it ... they didn’t think it was necessary or didn’t want to support it financially. Then, it gradually got better and better. Eventually just about everybody who was Basque joined.” Today, the Center provides a home base for new generations of Basques to sample their culture and nurture friendships, added Jill, who is making her own contribution to Basque culture as the lead singer of the popular band Amuma Says No. “This space is a touch-point for all things Basque. It has made a huge difference. We are lucky it is located where it is; it is pretty accessible, really convenient.”



Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Remodeling crew at the Basque Center, 1971.

Like so many families, the three women have experienced life-changing events in the Center. Jill and her mother, Juliana, held their wedding receptions there. The community celebrated Lydia's 90th birthday at the Center with a Roaring '20s party in 2010 and honored her life at a November 2013 funeral dinner. In between were dances and dance lessons, dinners, card games, Christmas parties, Shepherders' Balls and many other events. It is a place filled with memories, explained Jill. "The wood floor ... just to see the emptiness and imagine how many events have taken place there, to imagine it full, to think of all the ghosts in that main hall ...," she said. "We all married Basques," noted Juliana. "It is easy for us to make the Center an important part of our lives. It seems like we do everything here because we are

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Basque Museum & Cultural Center



Euzkaldunak card players (from left) Nick Beristain, Julian Hormaechea, Zenon Izaguirre and Rufino Hormaechea, about 1960. Opposite: Julian Lete tends bar, 2013.

interested.” Added Lydia: “My whole life has been the Basque Center. We’re all friends and we all gather here.”

The Basque Center has a cultural calendar of events that occur on a weekly, monthly or annual basis. Dinners for Center members were among the first traditional events. They have been held every month since the beginning. Different charter members of the Center hosted the dinners in the early years, explained Lydia, whose father herded sheep in the Mountain Home area. She was part of the first kitchen crew long before the members hired a chef. Lydia and other women helped shop for, prepare, cook and serve the monthly dinners. She attended almost every dinner at the Center until her passing.



Allan Ansell

The Mortzillak Dinner every November is another tradition on the Center’s calendar. Mortzillas are Basque blood sausages, and their savory cooking smells are probably more famous than the sausages themselves. When the sausages cooked, the aroma clung, absorbing into clothing, jackets, purses and about everything else in the room. “You could smell it all over town; it was a good smell to me,” Lydia joked. The familiar scent lingers in the large dance hall, where mortzilla, along with wine, has soaked into the pores of the oak floors.

The Shepherders’ Ball, held every December near Christmas, is one of Boise’s well-known Basque traditions, dating back to 1929. After spending months tending sheep during the boarding house era, men came down from the mountains dressed in their “ball” attire—jeans and casual shirts, usually white, for men and cotton dresses for women. Lydia recalled that in the early years one enterprising gentleman sold Levis from the back of his wagon near the entrance to the ball. Admission into the Shepherders’ Ball has always been a tough ticket; in the early days only Basques could get through the Center’s doors. “At the time it was very exclusive,” explained Lydia. Approximately 600 attended each year from the 1930s to the ‘70s. In

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1974, the event was opened to the public and 1,000 showed up at the Western Idaho Fairgrounds site. The event moved back to the Basque Center in 1985.

The Center also hosts a Children's Christmas Party in early December. Parents drop off gifts for their children and have Santa Claus (*Olentzero*)

deliver the presents during the party. Along with hosting large events, the Center provides local Basques a place to practice one of the art forms that makes their culture so unique—dance. For the past 50 years, the Center has been home to the weekly practices of the Oinkari Basque Dancers, as well as the Boiseko Gazteak, a children's dance troupe, and the Txantxangorriak music school that teaches children above the age of 8 and adults to play traditional Basque instruments such as the *trikitixa* (accordion) and the *pandareta* (tambourine). The Oinkari's history is as much a part of the Basque Center as the oak floors of the dance hall. A group of Boise Basque teenagers went to the Basque Country for a summer in 1960. They learned many traditional Basque dance techniques and came back to Boise to begin a new troupe that became the Oinkari dancers. Juliana Aldape was part of the "new kids" who replaced the first group of dancers as they grew older. Years later, she recalled a group of students from the Basque County who visited



Ongi etorri (meaning "welcome") underscores a front-door panel with the Basque coat of arms.

Boise. They didn't know the traditional dances, so the local Basques taught them. "They learned how to Basque dance here—they learned about their own culture, their own Basqueness more here in Boise than in the Basque County," Juliana said.

Anyone familiar with the Center knows there will be one of two people behind the bar to greet people—Flora Chucurra Aldazabal or Julian "Juli" Lete. Flora has worked at the Basque Center since 1983, and is as close to a



Allan Ansell

Bartender Flora Churrucá Aldazabal lubricates the cultural bonding with a tangy red wine, 2013.

Allan Ansell



Abby Norton, age 11, attends dance class and hopes to audition for the Oinkaris. Her grandfather Simon Achabal was one the the troupe's talented founders. Opposite: coat of arms flanking the bar.

boarding house host mother as they come. She came to America from the Basque Country during the boarding house era and has many years invested in the care of others. She most likely will be behind the bar on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Juli, the bar and operations manager, is another familiar face. November 2013 marked his 25th anniversary with the Center. If the walls of the Basque Center could talk, Juli would already know the stories. The son of first-generation immigrant parents, his father was a shepherd. Flora and his mother worked together and later ran a boarding house together. The Basque Center bar has no bouncers, no doormen and just a few backup helpers. On any weekend the Center can be reserved for an event that can house upwards of 500 people. Juli works most of these events, making sure everything is running smoothly. As the de facto caretaker of this Basque house, Juli hardly ever stands still, constantly washing dishes, organizing the alcohol, rotating items in the coolers, wiping

down the bar and counters over and over and simply taking care of the place only as someone would his own home. The bar, floors and tables are always clean, with nothing out of place.

When asked to identify his favorite spot, he looked around, leaned back against the bar, spread his arms out and rested his hands on top the counter. "Probably right here,"

he answered. Juli explained that the older generation has the most pride in the Basque Center. He says these are the people who built the “home” that the Basque Center has become. It remains a place where the Basque community continues its traditions and preserves its heritage. Within its walls are more stories to be told and memories to be made.

Can new generations of Boise Basques maintain the old-world traditions of an institution that is nearing its 65th birthday? Jill Aldape thinks so. “I don’t see any wavering interest. In time, given how many directions people are pulled today, there might be more who just touch on aspects of the Center rather than a tight-knit group that does everything. But there is enough momentum within the membership and community at large. I don’t really see it being threatened.” Her late grandmother, Lydia, may have the best explanation of why the Basque Center will continue to thrive: “We are around other folks who share an interest. It will survive because we are in it together.”



Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com

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Christine Hummer is a non-traditional student pursuing a degree in environmental studies and sustainability.



Ward Hooper's Basque tribute recalls the Deco prints of the 1920s.

Reclaiming the FLAG

by Kyle Eidson with Dave Lachiondo

In December 1970, 16 members of the Basque separatist group ETA, the acronym for Basque Homeland and Liberty, were charged with the murder of a Spanish police commissioner. The Burgos 16, court-martialed and found guilty, had little or no access to attorneys. Six of the accused were sentenced to death by firing squad. The case drew global notoriety, calling attention to the larger issues of independence for the Basque Country and the disregard for civil liberties and human rights under the rule of General Francisco Franco. In Idaho, many Basques protested, urging the commutation of Franco's sentences. For many Boise Basques, this was the latest chapter in a centuries-old cycle of repression and cultural subjugation.

The Basque Country (*Euskal Herria*) today is a region with three languages, two sovereign states and seven provinces. Approximately three million people make the region their home, most of whom live in Spain, with the remainder in France. Since the Middle Ages, French and Spanish kings agreed to a set of laws (*foruak*) that gave the Basques local control over tax-

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ation, imports/exports, military conscription and inheritances. The French Revolution (1789–99) effectively eliminated those rights in France, and the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714) and the Carlist Wars (18th century) led to their demise in Spain. The decline in local autonomy reached its nadir



with Gen. Franco's Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Over the next 35 years under Franco's rule, the Basque language was prohibited; Basque names were removed from birth records; the Spanish police (*Guardia Civil*) was a visible and repressive presence in the Basque region and all forms of Basque identity—language, music, literature and political symbols such as the Basque flag—were prohibited.

These efforts to remove Basque culture in the years following the Civil War were extremely damaging, especially in the northern provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. Post-war generation Basques remember being slapped in the face, or worse, at school for speaking their language, Euskara. These efforts, while moderately successful, did lead to a significant reduction in native Basque speakers.

The contentious relationship between Franco and the Basque Country hardened into acrimony because of Franco's insistence on a unitary Spanish state with no room for Basque identity. Basque nationalists from the time of Sabino Arana (1865–1903), the father of Basque nationalism, and later a Basque government in exile, have pressed for a peaceful and negotiated process leading to self-determination. By the 1960s, young Basques, tired of these failed attempts at a peaceful solution, formed ETA, *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Homeland and Liberty). The roots of ETA can be traced to Bilbao's University of Duesto, where in 1952 seven students met to discuss Basque self-determination. Their group grew in numbers and the desire for direct action increased. The young activists officially founded ETA on July 31, 1959.

At its inception, ETA promoted public, non-violent protests through its communications. However, a small cadre within the larger movement advocated armed resistance as a useful way to fight Franquist repression. In 1961, ETA executed its first act of political violence when it tried to derail a train full of Franco supporters in transit to a rally. The weak bomb explosion



Tate Modern, London

Pablo Picasso deplored Fascist brutality in *Weeping Woman*, 1937. Opposite: button for Abraham Lincoln Brigade of American volunteers who joined the fight against General Franco.

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lesluisvelez / Flickrriver



General Francisco Franco, 1892-1975.
Opposite: a spray-painted rebuke of
ETA graffiti.

failed to knock the train off the tracks. In response, the Spanish government arrested and tortured 100 suspected ETA supporters. Over the next 12 years, there was an increasing spiral of action/reaction, culminating with the 1973 ETA assassination of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, Franco's hand-picked successor as dictator of Spain.

ETA's goals were Basque solidarity, independence and reunification, along with the preservation of Basque culture and language. Their statement of demands, known as the "KAS Alternative," included recognizing that all Basques had a right to self-determination, the withdrawal of all national security forces from the Basque regions, the integration of the province of Navarra into the Basque Country, total amnesty for all Basque political prisoners, independence for all

four Basque provinces in Spain and the legalization of all separatist political movements. These goals had significant support among nearly all Basques, but there was a large divergence over tactics.

In faraway Boise, Basque nationalism was "an undercurrent, not a ground swell: a matter of concern, not action," as *New York Times* columnist Anthony Ripley wrote in 1970. Basque immigrants who came to Idaho in the years before the Spanish Civil War hesitated to get involved with the political and social turmoil of their homeland. Survival in America seemed to be their priority. But an influx of new Basque immigrants, those after the 1950s who had experienced first-hand the Franco repression, were more involved in the political fortunes of the homeland. In the aftermath of the Burgos 16 trial a few of these recent Basque immigrants formed an entity that supported Basque nationalism. The group called itself *Anaiak Danok* (Brothers All). At the onset, *Anaiak Danok* was a part of the established Basque Center, the



Paul fotografeert/Flickr

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hivemind/flickr



A protest mural denounces Basque repression in Belfast, 2012.

Idaho Basque Studies Center and the *Idahoko Euzko Zaleak* (Idaho Friends of the Basques). At its peak, Anaiak Danok included about 50 members, both Basque and non-Basque. Members of Anaiak Danok were interested in the political climate of the Basque homeland as well as in preserving the Basque language and culture. The group “wanted to educate the people of Idaho, Basque and non-Basque, about what was going on politically in the Basque country,” said one of the organization’s founders. Many prominent members of the Basque community in Boise, including Idaho Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa and Boise business leader Justo Sarria, hosted discussions, dinners, holiday celebrations and other activities, often at the Sarria residence.

As in the Basque Country, the local Basque community had mixed feelings about the region’s politics. Almost all felt that the Basques were a unique people and should be given the right of self-determination.

Some felt independence from Spain was the only way to ensure Basque identity, while others felt that a model of regional autonomy similar to states in the U.S. would be sufficient for the Basque regions.

Two first-generation immigrants are symbolic of those divergent views within the Boise Basque community. In 1952, Basque native Simon Achabal wrote a letter to his uncle Andres Achabal explaining his interest in coming to the United States. The 18-year-old Achabal came that same year to herd sheep. Two years later, his younger brother, Julian, came to the U.S. and worked alongside Simon. Simon said that his intention was “to come to this



Idaho Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa galvanized Basque-American protest against General Franco’s regime.

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Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica Collection



Anaiak Danok (Brothers All) raised money for Basque political causes and protested Franco's repression, Boise, about 1970.

country, sacrifice, save money, go back to the Basque Country, buy something [a house] and make a living." But upon his return from a visit to the homeland, he realized that Franco had made life "miserable" for the Basque people. He made up his mind that Boise was now his home.

Although Simon had little interest in Anaiak Danok, Julian, immersed himself in its activities. He served as president of the organization for a year. Julian was also passionate in his animosity toward the Spanish government. He once asked a family member who visited Franco's tomb, "Did you piss on that bastard's grave?" Julian tried to recruit Simon, but Simon never felt the political intensity of his younger sibling. Simon surely had reasons to join Anaiak Danok. His father was a prisoner for four years after the Spanish Civil War, accused of being a "comunista terrorista." Simon also related that if



Boise State University

Idaho's Frank Church damned Basque persecution. Pictured: Senator Frank and Bethine Church in Gernika, 1978.

one wrote a letter from the U.S. to Basque friends or family members, any mention of politics meant retribution against the recipient in the homeland. Even so, Simon refused to join.

According to Simon, Anaiak Danok supported ETA. This position was in line with Julian's political ideas, but it was not Simon's. According to Simon, Anaiak Danok began as an organization that supported Basques back home and held local celebrations of Basque culture. But it transformed into a group that became too enamored of ETA's political aims and tactics. "When you start killing people, I can't go for that," Simon said. This was the central conflict for many Basques, both in the homeland and the diaspora.

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The most notable Basque voice in Anaiak Danok was Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa. He joined the organization after a trip to the Basque homeland. Born in Carey, Idaho, in 1917 of Basque immigrant parents, Cenarrusa was a prominent supporter of Basque independence. Since the Basque

Country is the motherland of the Basques, wrote

Cenarrusa in his memoirs, the Basque

Country is a nation. The Basque people should have the right of self-determination; they ought to have the right to

become a nation-state if the majority of the people chose to do so in a free election. The Basque people,

according to Cenarrusa, have wanted an independent Basque state since the 18th century. Basque independence was a crucial political goal for

Cenarrusa for decades. He never

wavered in his support for ETA's political aims; however, Cenarrusa publicly rejected the

small number of ETA supporters who resorted to

violent tactics, once stating to Spanish Ambassador Javier Ruperez, "Our end is to get rid of terrorism." From Cenarrusa's point of view "patriotism" better reflected ETA's goals for Basque autonomy.

The Burgos 16 case instigated the first activity of protest toward the Franco regime in Idaho. Cenarrusa led the effort. The trial focused the world's media attention on the political repression in Spain. Governments and international political groups demanded that the death sentence for six of the accused be commuted. Cenarrusa worked with the Idaho congressional delegation in an attempt to influence the U.S. State Department to pressure for restraint by the Spanish government. Idaho Gov. Don Samuelson, a close political ally of Cenarrusa, sent a cable to Gen. Franco espousing the principles of trying civilians in civil rather than military court. After the death sentences were announced, Cenarrusa organized a declaration signed by more than 200 Boise Basques asking Franco to commute the sentences. A benefit dance followed, with the proceeds going to the 16 families of the accused. U.S. Sen. Frank Church, then a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also lent his voice for commutation of the sentences. On Dec. 30, 1970, one day before the first scheduled execution, Franco commuted the sentences to 30-year prison terms for each of the six.





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Simon Achabal of Boise with the Basque coat of arms at the Basque Museum & Cultural Center. Opposite: Franco's likeness on a copper peseta, 1953.

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Irekia



Pete Cenarrusa presides over a handshake between Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter (left) and visiting Basque President Francisco Javier "Patxi" López, Boise, 2010.

In 1975, two Basques were executed for the death of a Spanish police officer, bringing more criticism of the Spanish court system. Members of Anaiak Danok asked the U.S. to support 16 other nations in protest by removing their Spanish ambassadors. Anaiak Danok met with Sen. Church, asking him to address the Basque conflict. In 1978, Sen. Church and his wife, Bethine, visited the Basque Country and received a hero's welcome. It was viewed as a victory for Basques living in the U.S. when Church visited the symbolic Tree of Gernika and the historic Basque parliament. In October

1975, Anaiak Danok received a request for aid from *Anai Artea*, a Basque refugee house in the homeland. Bombings and cruelty in the southern provinces sent an overflow of refugees to the house. The Basque women of Anaiak Danok launched an effort in Boise to gather blue and green stamp books, money and other necessities. They sent their fellow Basques at Anai Artea Christmas packages that were graciously accepted. By the late 1970s, however, Anaiak Danok disbanded due to lack of interest and some internal discord. At its core, this discord related to the use of violence by ETA.

Idaho, primarily through Cenarussa, has had a long, often vexed, relationship with the Spanish government over the Basque Country. Cenarussa devoted a lot of time on Basque affairs outside of his duties as Secretary of State. He was extremely concerned with his homeland; his relatives lived in the Basque Country under Franco's dictatorship. The Idaho Legislature, at Cenarussa's request, passed a resolution in 1972 calling on the United States to pressure Spain to stop executing, torturing, jailing and suppressing Basques for political reasons. The resolution called for the halt of all Spanish foreign aid unless amnesty was granted. The U.S. had sent nearly \$2.5 billion in assistance to Spain during the Cold War years in exchange for military bases.

Years later, Cenarussa had the opportunity to defend Basque autonomy and criticize Spanish policies in a face-to-face meeting with Ambassador Ruperez. In the 2001 meeting arranged by Idaho Sen. Larry Craig to discuss Spanish-U.S. relations, the ambassador declined to mention Spain's relationship with the Basques. This failure to address the Basque question angered Cenarussa, who was present at the meeting. In the ensuing heated discussion, Cenarussa, who believed the ambassador cavalierly dismissed three decades of Franco's repression, stated, "It [ETA] started with Franco suppressing Basque culture and assassinating people." Ruperez and Spain's Prime Minister, Jose Maria Anzar, believed that the issue of Basque independence had nothing to do with politics. Rather, it had to do with getting rid of ETA. Ruperez claimed that ETA kidnapped him in 1979, a statement that Cenarussa vehemently denied.

In 2002, one year before he retired as secretary of state, Cenarussa and then-state representative David Bieter ushered another memorandum through the Idaho Legislature supporting self-determination in the Basque Country. The measure caught the attention of the U.S. State Department, which strongly suggested the addition of wording that condemned terrorism. The Basque-language newspaper *Egunkaria* covered news of the resolution. Soon after, the Spanish government closed the paper's offices and arrested

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its editor and eight staff members, according to Cenarussa's memoir, *Bizkaia to Boise*. Cenarussa continued his fight for Basque causes until his death in November 2013.

Modern Spain has been described as a country on the cusp of federalism. The demands of the Basque political leaders may accelerate that development,

although claims of federalism or autonomy will not totally resolve outstanding conflicts. After Franco's death in 1975, a Statute of Autonomy for the Basque

Country was ratified in 1979, although more than 40 percent of the Basque electorate abstained from voting. The statute established a parliamentary system of government whereby the Basque Autonomous Parliament elected a *lehendakari* (president).

A resurgence of Basque nationalism and identity ensued and continues to grow. The Basque language was recognized, unimpeded by Spanish law, alongside the constitution of 1978. Basque leaders quickly

moved to emphasize their language as a co-equal to Spanish and integral to commerce and the arts. Basques in the autonomous region were able to establish some local taxation and negotiated the amount sent to the central government in Madrid. With more money staying in the

Basque region, there were major improvements in transportation, education, recreational facilities and other public services.

Despite the increased freedom of speech, assembly and more local control, the dirty war between ETA and the Spanish government continued unabated through the 1980s, 1990s and into the new century. Increasingly, ETA targeted Basques who did not share its political tactics of extortion, kidnapping and assassination. In the 1980s, the Socialist government of Felipe Gonzalez sanctioned the use of private "hit



Carlos Latuff



A mural calls for release of ETA activist Arnaldo Otegi, 2013. *Pake bidean* means "pathway to peace." Opposite: Spain prime minister in caricature as he straddles the Basque Country, wielding the law of Spain, 2013.

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basqueconflict.blogspot.com



Political prisoners and self-determination remain Basque separatist issues despite an ETA ceasefire. Pictured: fist raised in protest, 2012.

squads" to deal with ETA. Later, the conservative government of Jose Maria Aznar made its efforts to eradicate ETA the centerpiece of its political platform. In 2003, Basque filmmaker Julio Medem, produced and directed *La Pelota Vasca*, a close look at the Basque question, ostensibly to find a middle ground. Unfortunately, representatives of the two political poles (ETA and the Spanish conservative party, Partido Popular) declined to participate in the film. For years, ETA's political party, Herri Batasuna, refused to participate in Basque parliamentary politics but did control several municipal governments. Later, called only Partido Popular, this "association" was outlawed by the Aznar government in 2003. For its part, ETA announced, but subsequently broke truces or ceasefires in 1988, 1989, 1992, 1996, 1998 and 2006.

Finally, in 2010 a permanent ceasefire promoted by outside negotiators such as Gerry Adams of Ireland's Sinn Fein went into effect and has held to the present day. Contemporaneously, a new leftist Basque nationalist party called Bildu has distanced itself from violence and ETA and has emerged as the second-largest Basque Nationalist party and the second-largest vote-getter after the older more conservative party, PNV-EAJ. These developments portend greater political rapprochement with the Spanish government, but there are still significant political hurdles to overcome. These include the ongoing demonization of all Basque nationalists as "terrorists" or "terrorist sympathizers" by the Spanish government and in the Spanish press; the continued incarceration of Basque prisoners in jails far from the Basque provinces; and an increasing demand for taxes from Spain's economic engines (the Basque provinces and Catalonia) in a time of severe economic austerity in Spain.

Recently, the Basque government has tried with some success to bypass the Spanish court system to present its case to the European Union. A recent EU court found that the Spanish government's unilateral "extension" of sentences for Basque prisoners without right to counsel, hearing or appeal was a human rights violation. Basques continue to stage demonstrations protesting Spanish human rights policies, such as one in Bilbao in January 2014 when tens of thousands of protesters marched through the city's streets. The issue of the Basque homeland remains unresolved and tenuous, but more hopeful than at any time in recent memory.

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Grove Street with its shade trees and waterwheels was Boise's first tourist attraction. Pictured: the historic streetscape, proudly restored.

12

Remaking

GROVE

by Jennifer Shelby

I'm amazed at what goes on here over the course of a week," said a recent visitor to the Basque Block on Grove Street between Capitol Boulevard and Sixth Street in Boise. "There are all kinds of things that I've never seen in my life." Indeed, the diverse activities there offer a surprising array of choices. Interested in Basque food? Try the Basque pub Bar Gernika or Leku Ona Restaurant and Hotel. Want to learn how to prepare some Basque dishes yourself? Sign up for a cooking class offered by the Basque Market. Want to explore Basque history and culture? Tour the Basque Museum & Cultural Center and nearby Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga boarding house. How about language classes? Yes, Mondays and Thursdays at the Basque Museum. Basque sports? Check out the 100-year-old fronton to watch games on Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Basque dancing? Sure, Tuesdays for little kids and Sundays for the older group. Basque card games? Just about any afternoon or evening at the Basque Center.

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City of Boise Department of Arts and History



A Chinese dormitory, left, flanked the Basque Center in Grove Street's immigrant district. During the heyday of the boarding houses, Basques shared the 600 block with the Hop Sing tong from Canton.

And these are only a few of the Basque events that keep the Basque Block scene alive almost every night of the week. Often the streets are closed for catered dinners, fundraisers and street dances. As longtime philanthropist/preservationist Adelia Garro Simplot put it, the Basque Block is the "gateway into Boise for the Basque culture." Only today it is even more. The block that connects to the Basque life in Boise has evolved into a gathering place for all.

The first Basques who came to Boise could never have imagined this Basque Block. The 1900 census identified 61 Basques in Idaho, a number that is probably far too low because many never registered a residence or filled out the census paperwork while on the range. Most young male immigrants came to work as sheepherders. The annual work cycle called for a reliable place to lodge without the demands of ownership. Boarding houses



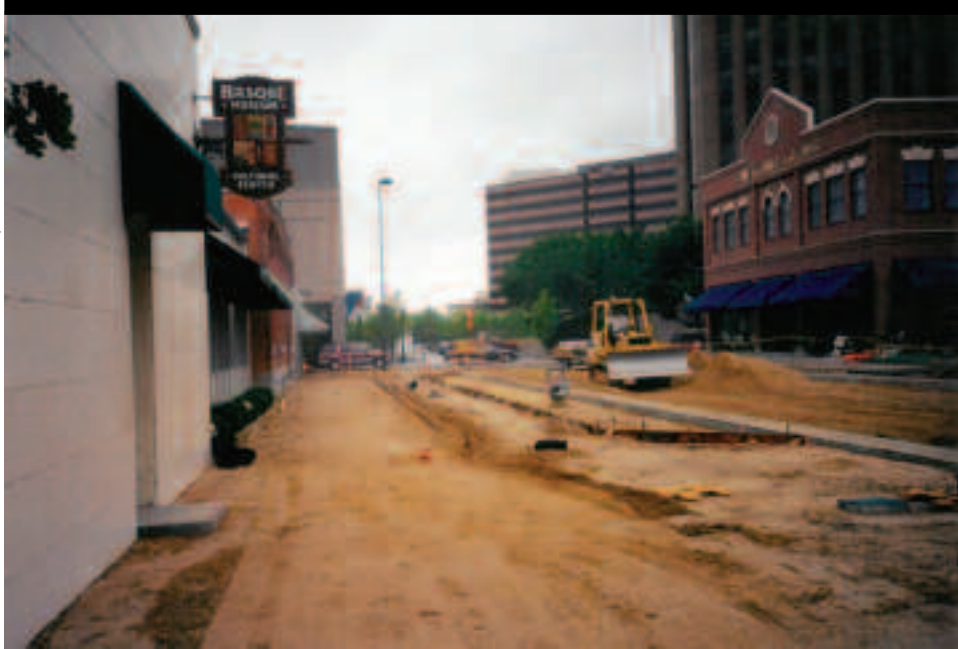
Warehouses became a tourist attraction on a street once dismissed as too blighted for urban renewal. Pictured: Leku Ona, opened in 2005.

served that purpose, providing places where herders could stay connected to their homeland through the familiarity of food, language, dance, music, games and sport. Boarding houses preserved the culture of the new immigrants while also guiding their transition into life in Idaho. Boise's boarding houses were generally in the same downtown area bounded by Idaho Street to the north and Front to the south, and spanning from Third to Fourteenth streets. Usually someone from the boarding house would meet the trains with greetings in *Euskara* (Basque), both to help a fellow Basque and to gain a customer. The downtown boarding houses served many functions—hospitals, sports facilities, employment agencies, translating centers, post offices/message centers and depositories for herders' valuables. Many young Basque men and women met, sang, danced and fell in love at the boarding houses. Often these young couples came from within a few miles of each other but had never met in the Old Country.

The need for boarding houses faded because of a combination of simultaneous circumstances. In her book *Boise Basques: Dreamers and*

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Basque Museum & Cultural Center



Resurfacing Grove, 2000. Opposite: Ward Hooper, assisted by the Bieter brothers, (right) pushes his laiak sculpture to Capitol at Grove, 2000.

Doers, Gloria Totoricaguena described how the combined effects of the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act, the National Origins Act and the Great Depression slowed Basque immigration, which led to the decline of boarding houses. By the 1970s, the area around Grove Street fell into disrepair. From the outside, it was a rundown street with some vacant buildings. With the wrecking ball knocking down many of Boise's old buildings, it seemed likely that this block was going to meet the same fate. The primary Basque connection that remained was the Basque Center, a fixture on Sixth and Grove since 1950.

However, the destiny of the block changed forever with a few timely acquisitions by someone with a passion for cultural preservation: Adelia Garro Simplot, whose father emigrated from the Basque Country. The historic Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga boarding house, built in 1864 and the oldest brick building in the city, was about to be torn down for parking. In a spur-of-the-moment decision, Adelia volunteered to buy it from the Uberuaga descendants. Her father-in-law, potato magnate J.R. Simplot, loaned her

Basque Museum & Cultural Center



money for the down payment. The property was in rough shape when she acquired it in 1983. She had no immediate vision for its future, but knew it should be saved and remain a part of the Basque community

because it had significance in both Basque and Boise history. She decided the building should be for the community.

In 1985, she led the formation of a nonprofit group—the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho, Inc., later to become the Basque Museum & Cultural Center, Inc. They agreed the property would become the home of the new Basque Museum & Cultural Center, the only one of its kind in the U.S. The community pitched in to make repairs and rehabilitate the old building. Adelia made the mortgage payments for three years, and in 1986, with her husband, the late Richard R. Simplot, she donated the house to the Basque Cultural Center “for and in consideration of our love and affection for the Basque heritage and history in the State of Idaho.” The Basque Museum & Cultural Center assumed the loan payments beginning January 1987 and an official dedication ceremony took place on June 19, 1987. “When you are young, hard or easy isn’t the issue; it was fun. It was a joy. It was amazing how much the community helped get things done,” Adelia remarked in a 2013 interview.

The former boarding house was home to the museum until it moved its offices and main gallery next door in 1993. The museum then restored the Jacobs-Uberuaga house to its original state, with rooms representing both the Jacobs’ era in the 1800s and the Basque boarding house era in the 1920s. The restored house opened to the public at the 2005 Jaialdi festival and thousands have taken guided tours since then. The Cub Bar, now Bar

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Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com



Mayor David Bieter beams as Adelia Garro Simplot struggles with oversized scissors at the ribbon cutting for the restored Jacobs-Uberuaga House, 2005.



Chorizos, red beans and patio dining lure tourists to Leku Ona, built in the 1930s as a boarding house.

Gernika, was the next property for the Basque Museum & Cultural Center to acquire. The gateway to the block, the Cub was going to be torn down for a few parking spaces for an adjacent bank. Saved in 1990, today the building is home to a thriving Basque pub and restaurant.

The building next door to the Jacobs-Uberuaga house, at 611 Grove Street, stood vacant for many years. Adelia contacted friends at a local bank, which offered to gift the building to the Basque community. However, in the meantime an individual who wanted to purchase the building and replace the older portion of it with a parking lot had already put money down on the property. If the Basque community wanted it, they would have to deal with the new owner, who wanted to tear down the older section of the building. Its lot extended inches from the Uberuaga house, so the planned parking spaces would have extended alarmingly close to the porch of the historic home. The community stepped forward to help. The museum group hosted a luncheon at the Uberuaga house for a number of business people. J.R. Simplot addressed the group. "She wants to do this, and I am going to

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Allan Ansell



Red-green lauburus swirled into the pavement make Grove indelibly Basque. Pictured, dancers Lily Achabal Papapietro and Henry Lachiondo Turcotte.

give her this money and you have to match it," he said about Adelia's plan. They agreed to those conditions, and another Basque monument was saved from demolition. The Basque Museum & Cultural Center began holding language classes there in 1991 and relocated offices, a gift shop, collections and permanent exhibits there in 1993.

Juan "Jack" and Juana Anduiza built a new hotel and enclosed fronton in 1914 at 619 Grove Street. Briggs Engineering owned the building for almost 50 years after it closed as a boarding house. When they were ready to sell, Mrs. Briggs called Adelia to ask if she would like to purchase it. Adelia called her friend, Richard Hormaechea, to see if they could purchase it

together. They did, closing the deal on January 7, 1993. The boarders' rooms now serve as offices and the former kitchen and living space serve as storage areas for the museum and a rehearsal spot for the Basque band Amuma Says No. The fronton, the oldest enclosed Basque court in the West, is still in use. With this purchase, all of the buildings on the south side of Grove Street, all significant to the Basque community, were preserved.

In addition to the preservation of its historic buildings, the Basque Block's streetscape also went through an extensive renovation during the 1990s. Community members interested in preserving the historic Basque areas around Grove Street organized in 1987. Mary K. Aucutt and Francis "Patxi" Lostra led the organization, which represented members of Euzkaldunak, Inc, the Oinkari Dancers and the Basque Museum & Cultural Center. They secured a grant worth approximately \$13,000 and formed the Basque Neighborhood Marketplace, Inc., which focused on rejuvenating and restoring the Grove Street neighborhood. The grant funded a study on how best to develop the area.

The group hired city planner Jerome Mapp in 1988 to do an analysis and master plan for the area. His analysis and plans covered two areas within the portion of Old Boise/Eastside from Capitol to Fifth Street between Main and Front, focusing primarily on the area between Capitol Boulevard and Sixth Street due to the Basque community's ties to buildings on the south side of Grove. Mark and Betty Heath of Business Interiors of Idaho owned the majority of the north side. Mapp's original analysis was a reconnaissance survey, currently filed at the Idaho State Historical Society. The intent of the survey was to identify each building along with its key features and historic significance. He also created a vision for what the block could be, including a rendering of the block inspired by his research on the Basque Country and the possibility of an open-air market. In her book about the Basques in Boise, Totoricaguena explained how more than two years and 500 pages of research devoted to the plan demonstrated the seriousness of the Basque community's intentions to renovate and restore the Grove Street area. While the Mapp plan was not implemented, it furthered the momentum to change the block.

The first wave of streetscape improvement occurred in 1991-92 on the Basque side of the street. An excavating company removed pavement and volunteers planted sod donated by Cloverdale Nursery. Boise City donated seven trees, and Euzkaldanuk Inc., Albertson's executive Warren McCain and West One Bank donated three old-fashioned street lamps. Volunteers updated the look of the museum and painted its front panels.

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culinary-colorado.com



Preservation Idaho, in 2000, honored Grove Street's Bardenay with a coveted Orchid Award.

Several years later, a series of events in 1999 led to the eventual redevelopment of the block. The city's Visual Arts Advisory Committee selected the Basque Block for a \$30,000 public art project later dedicated to Pat and Eloise Bieter, two pillars in the Basque community who were killed that year in a car accident. The arts committee selected the entry to Grove Street as the site for the artwork. The committee met with the Basque community to get a sense of what symbols, ideas and materials would be appropriate for the piece.

These meetings ignited a desire by the Basque community to do more than a piece of art. They hoped for a larger project, one that would rejuvenate the whole block as a place to preserve their unique culture and provide a better space for festivals and celebrations. The changes would include both the practical elements of street reconstruction as well as design elements to make the Basque culture more visible to the community. City leaders agreed. The Capital City Development Corporation came on board to oversee the



Jon C. Hodgson - BasquePhotos.com

Summer dancing can be contagious on a block that quickly converts to a tented festival plaza. Pictured: kalimotxo (red wine and cola) t-shirts, 2005.

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www.centrocaro.net

Executive Director Patty Miller of the Basque Museum & Cultural Center effectively served as Mediator-in-Chief of the block's restoration. Opposite: matchbox from the museum's artifact collection.

process and bring additional resources. They hired planners from Jensen-Belts Associates to draw designs and create a budget. At the same time, the arts committee issued a call to artists asking for their ideas for an entrance marker. They selected *Laiak*, a sculpture by Boise artist Ward Hooper, as the piece to welcome visitors to the Basque Block and honor the memory of the Bieters.

This project marked the first time that the Arts Commission had gone beyond the installation of public art and used design to change the nature and the feeling of a space. It provided evidence that

redesigning a space can bring economic development to an area, according to Karen Bubb, public arts manager for the city's Department of Art and History. She attributed the successful synergy of the project to the grassroots nature of the campaign. Public, private, non-profit and community sectors combined creative and financial resources to strategically shape the character of the neighborhood. Calling it an example of "creative placemaking," Bubb said, "It really changed the nature of the space. It's a 'there' now." And the block's successful development, Bubb added, was a key factor when the city passed a 2001 ordinance that allocated one percent of every city capital project to public art.

The completed project gave the block a new roadway with colored concrete and *lauburus* (Basque cross) design elements, curbless sidewalks to facilitate festivities, new landscaping, new street furnishings and the entry artwork. Additional design elements included engraved granite squares in the sidewalk featuring Basque coats of arms, Basque surnames and the lyrics to songs. A mural on the side of the fronton depicts scenes from Idaho and the Basque Country. The streetscape project was completed in time for the Jaialdi International Basque Cultural Festival in July 2000. Various community entities split the \$417,472 cost of the renovation. The City of Boise added \$100,000 beyond the funding of the entryway art piece; the Ada County Highway District, \$50,000; the Basque Block property owners, \$100,000; and the CCDC the remaining \$167,472.



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Basque Museum & Cultural Center



The Basque Museum houses professionally archived research collections. Its whaling exhibition was a reminder that open-range sheepherding was mostly foreign to ancestors from the Bay of Biscay.

Restoration also was afoot on the north side of Grove. Mark and Betty Heath converted an old warehouse/garage into useable commercial space with the opening of the Bardenay Restaurant and Distillery in 1999. The Basque Market began leasing space in 2000 and the Leku Ona Restaurant

and Hotel opened next door in 2005. "People say, 'Oh you are so lucky to have your culture,'" said museum director Patty Miller as she surveyed the buildings owned by Basques on Grove Street. "But it has nothing to do with luck. It takes hundreds of volunteers to support the cause."

Boise Mayor Dave Bieter, himself a leader in the Basque community and the son of the late Pat and Eloise Bieter, explained the importance of the Basque Block in an email interview. "Without a physical presence of an ethnic group, past and present, it is difficult to get any sense of their history. While you could designate any block or area with some monicker (arts district, sports district, etc.) that very block has such geographic and historic significance, with the fronton as the centerpiece, that no other area would do," Bieter noted.

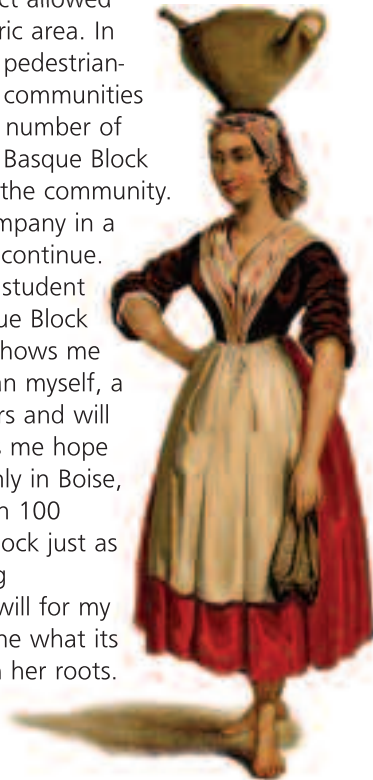
"Many who did not know about the block or its significance in Boise history and Basque culture have found it. This has brought additional tourism and activity to the previously rundown street." He added that the Basque Block is successful as an economic development project because it gave new life to vacant or underutilized land, buildings and infrastructure. This created new jobs as businesses located on the block.

What does the future hold for perpetuating the heritage of the Basques in Boise? Looking forward, Adelia Garro Simplot hopes that what began in 1983 continues. She said the Basque Block has added so much to the Boise community. She is sad that the Spanish Village and downtown Chinese buildings from her childhood are all gone. People now realize the value in preserving the Basque Block, she said. "It was a series of steps, done little by little. Here we have ended up with the entire side of the street honoring the Basques of yesteryear. It's turned out to be quite wonderful. It is what we had always hoped for but didn't know would happen for sure." Her hope is to somehow see an addition. "I have an even bigger vision for it in the future," she said.

The original planning study done by Jerome Mapp in 1988 also included the block of Grove Street to the east of the existing Basque Block, between Fifth and Sixth streets. Currently that block is dominated by parking lots, making it the ideal place for an extension. Clay Carley, a developer and property owner in the Old Boise/Eastside area, owns the majority of the land on the north side of Grove Street. "The streetscape here is very attractive. I think extending that eastward makes a lot of sense," he said, describing how the low-key, inviting, comfortable pedestrian scale of the historic area makes it a perfect location for the mixed-use commercial/residential/retail development that he envisions for the north side of the street. Katina Dutton, development director for Capital City Development Corporation, confirmed that

The Basque Block came into being because of vision and effort. A collaborative dream among the Basque community, local property owners, the city, planners, designers and the highway district allowed the preservation and development of this historic area. In the process, they also built something more—a pedestrian-friendly place that the Basque and non-Basque communities alike embrace and enjoy through the countless number of activities and events that take place there. The Basque Block functions as a front porch for the members of the community. It is a place to bring friends and enjoy their company in a comfortable setting. Indications are that it will continue.

Sixteen-year-old Emily Pape, a Boise High student and Oinkari dancer, said it this way: “The Basque Block represents a home country I’ve never seen. It shows me that I am a part of something much bigger than myself, a culture that has come before me for many years and will hopefully continue long after I’m gone. It gives me hope for the future of the Basque community not only in Boise, but all over the world, and that Basque children 100 years from now will be able to dance on the block just as I have since I was five years old. It’s a humbling feeling knowing I belong to these people and will for my entire life.” For Emily, the Basque Block has done what its founders intended. It has reconnected her with her roots. It has given her, and many others, a chance to experience part of what makes Boise unique.



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Stained glass honors the Tree of Gernika in the Basque Casa de Juntas.



Frank R. "Patxi" Goitia (standing, second from right) celebrates with family at their Main Street boarding house called the Royal Hotel.

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A shepherd's bilingual tree carving says "up with Spain" in Spanish and "with the Basque Country on top" in Euskara. Opposite: nude carved into an aspen below Genoa Peak, Nevada.

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Idaho State Historical Society

The Basque Lounge at Ninth and Main streets in Boise, 1953.

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Boise State University

Boise State University, with an enrollment of more than 21,000 students, is a progressive student-focused university dedicated to excellence in teaching, innovative research, leadership development and community service. Its students benefit from an emphasis on the undergraduate experience, including public affairs research as demonstrated by the student papers in this publication.

With record student enrollment, new academic buildings, additional degree programs and an expanding research portfolio, it is no coincidence that recently Boise State was ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* among the nation's "top up-and-coming schools." With Idaho's fastest-growing research program, Boise State is in the midst of a transformation that builds on its traditional teaching strengths while expanding its capabilities in research and scholarly activity. This evolution reflects the integral role that Boise State plays in contributing to the quality of life in the Treasure Valley and beyond.



Becoming Basque tells the richly historical story of Boise's most ethnic streetscape. Centered on the Basque Block of Grove Street, where a sapling from the Tree of Gernika shades a world-renowned cultural center, the book is the fifth in an annual series on trends that shape metropolitan growth. Pictured: Boise's Oinkari dancers; front: weightlifter Jon Arrieta, a competitor at Jaialdi in Boise, 2005.

Editors John Bieter, John Ysursa and Dave Lachiondo are professors in the Basque Studies Program at Boise State University.

For ordering and an online catalog visit sspa.boisestate.edu/publications.

