

Enterprising Artists Used Wood of Historic Trees from Boise's Capitol Project to Craft an Idaho Legacy



Assemblyman Ken Cooley

Capitol Historic Trees

In 1891, a year after he signed Idaho into statehood, President Benjamin Harrison planted a Water Oak on the Idaho State Capitol grounds. Twelve years later, a Rock Sugar Maple was planted by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. Later, in 1911, William H. Taft planted an Ohio Buckeye.

In 2007, these trees, as well as Ash and American Elm, were removed from the Capitol grounds during the Capitol Renovation Project. Representative Max Black, not wanting to see the timber from these trees disposed of, organized the Historic Trees Project. The wood from these historic trees were used to create the objects you see by woodworkers, woodcrafters, and artists from around the State in order to preserve a part of the Capitol Building's history.

The American Elm was planted along the south side of the Capitol grounds c. 1887.

The Ash was planted along the north side of the Capitol grounds c. 1887.

Rock Sugar Maple was planted by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 on the Capitol grounds.

The Ohio Buckeye was planted by President William Howard Taft in 1911 on the Capitol grounds.

The Water Oak was planted by President Benjamin Harrison in 1891 on the Capitol grounds.



08/04/2016 11:32

A Tale of Trees

It all began in 1887 with the completion of the Territorial Capitol. Around the perimeter of the building Ash and Elm were planted. In 1891 President Benjamin Harrison visited Idaho and planted a Red Oak tree in front of the southeast corner of the building. In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt visited Idaho and planted a Rock Sugar Maple tree next to the Red Oak tree. In 1911 President William Howard Taft visited Idaho and planted an Ohio Buckeye tree next to the Rock Sugar Maple tree. In order to complete the current Capitol building, the original Territorial Capitol building was removed.

These trees graced the Capitol grounds for 120 years. In 2006 a decision was made to remodel the current Capitol building and add new underground wings. This being the case, the trees would have to be removed. Representative Max C. Black, with the help of many other volunteers, salvaged the trees and distributed the wood to Idaho artisans. These artisans were able to keep a piece of the wood for themselves, in turn they were asked to make a like item to be donated back to the Capitol building. As you walk through the Capitol you will see the amazing abilities of the Idaho wood artisans who took part in this wonderful project.

Rep. Max Black



Territorial Capitol



Current Capitol

08/04/2016 11:35



Gib Floyd
(Kama, Idaho)
Travel Writing Desk, 2009
Harrison Oak and American Elm
Collection of the Idaho State Historical Society

08/04/2016 11:33



John Gonzales
(Idaho Falls, Idaho)

Knife and stand, 2009
Rock Sugar Maple, Owyhee Picture
Jasper

Beadwork by Nichole Frognger (Rigby,
Idaho)

Collection of the Idaho State Historical Society

08/04/2016 11:33



Mike Bennett
(Bismar, Idaho)
Idaho State, 2009
Capital Historic Trust Wood
Collection of Idaho State Historical Society

Lorraine Marson
(Pocatello, Idaho)
Idaho State, 2009
Capital Historic Trust Wood
Collection of Idaho State Historical Society

08/04/2016 11:33



Sharon Becker
(Boise, Idaho)

Deer, 2009
Idaho Capitol historic tree wood

08/04/2016 11:34



08/04/2016 11:34



**** Oregon Short Line Model Train ****

This train was made out of wood taken from five different historic trees (red oak, Ohio buckeye, rock sugar maple, ash and elm) which had to be removed from the Idaho Capitol grounds during the 2007 capital restoration project. It is similar to the train on which three U.S. Presidents traveled through Idaho on official visits to the State. The passenger car No. 151 was the private executive car of the President of The Oregon Short Line Railroad.

In 1891 President Benjamin Harrison visited Idaho and planted a red oak tree in commemoration of his visit. President Theodore Roosevelt visited in 1903 and planted a rock sugar maple tree. President Robert Taft's visit took place in 1911 and he planted an Ohio buckeye tree. The ash and elm trees were planted on the Territorial Capitol grounds in 1887 and survived until the 2007 removal.

Car 151 is still in existence today and is located in McCall, Idaho. It is used as a private summer retreat by Skip Smyser and his wife, Sen. Melinda Smyser.

Historic Turn-of-the-Century Boise Buildings
The scene behind the model train is a montage of historic Boise buildings, identified above.

Four Great Presidents, September 1903

President Robert Taft 1911

Car 151 - Oregon Short Line Railroad
This car was retired from regular railroad use in August 1935.

08/04/2016 11:34



