

“Idaho: From the Heart”

Original programing created by Rodney Mitchell

*1 x 90 Broadcast Episodes
15 x 10 Webisodes
Assorted Additional Social Media*

A Documentary & Web Series

*Exploring the core nature of philanthropy
and its effect on the people, communities,
and history of Idaho*

II Film Treatment

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Feature Documentary

“Idaho: From the Heart” is a ninety-minute feature documentary designed to support, celebrate, and promote philanthropy and community in Idaho.

The following details the films’ content, then outlines an approximation of its’ structure:

I Content:

The film will be structured around three unique layers of content; “Threads”, “Chronologies”, and “Lively Interludes”. Interweaving complimentary and at times contradictory material produces engaging, compelling documentaries.

The following outlines each layer and its’ structure, and includes story examples to show how the material will be dramatized:

A. Threads:

Threads are individual story and thematic ideas. Each is it’s own story, and is developed individually in the film, although it interacts and impacts the other threads at various times in the film.

1. “Goodness”

Goodness in people is a hard trait to define. What goodness is and where it comes from is difficult to communicate.

The fact that people can have a quality that leads them to give and work for the good of others and their communities is rarely treated realistically. Media typically renders such people as one-dimensional clichés, in which goodness is an inherited trait that occasionally brightens the lives of others.

The reality is much more interesting. The film will explore these peoples’ lives, characters, and complex motives, the often-costly personal choices they made, and the historic influence they’ve had on Idaho.

In addition to the motives and sentiments you would expect from such people, there is also a healthy boldness, a positive, aggressive quality about these people that makes them interesting as well as heart warming.

Goodness in people, their groups, and their works, is an important thread, which the film will explore and develop in depth:

Story: The Boise Columbian Club

By the dawn of the 20th century Idaho had scores of social and civic clubs in communities across the state. There was also an astonishing number, over 100,000, of women's civic clubs in the Midwest, the bulk of which were headquartered in Colorado and Idaho.

In 1892 Idaho Governor Norman Willey commissioned a group of Boise socialites to help design Idaho's pavilion at the Chicago World Fair, which was a huge success, attracting some 18 million visitors during the course of the fair.

Inspired by the bold vision for the future they saw there, they determined to bring that vision back to Idaho, and formed "The Columbian Women's Club". By 1910 the club had 200 active members, and more than eleven different departments, tasked with responsibilities such as town and village improvement, home economics (improving nutrition, home & child care), travel and international affairs, the arts, and their most passionate cause, education and literacy.

On average, mining towns had twice the number of saloons, brothels, and gambling houses than all other businesses combined. Determined to bring literacy and civilization to Idaho, The Columbian Club decided travelling libraries were the fastest, quickest way to it. They quickly raised money for books, packed them into wooden crates, loaded them onto stagecoaches, and sent them out as mobile libraries. These became so popular that five years later more than 100 communities were receiving books regularly.

The club's literacy program went on to found Boise's first library, the first state library, and the travelling book program founded Idaho's library system.

The Columbian Clubs' reputation for resourcefulness and tenacity for getting things done in Idaho was legendary and well deserved. Yet that was not the whole story.

This interview was published in the "Souvenir of Western Women" in 1905, and quotes club members Emily Savage and Mary Nixon:

"Eastern club women tell us that we are especially favored in receiving the aid and co-operation of state legislators and city officials in our efforts to improve prevailing usages and correct existing abuses. They hint that it is largely due to our possession of the ballot. But we prefer, and justly, to attribute this to the native courtesy and kindness of our western man. Be he governor, mayor, legislator, or private citizen, he has always responded generously to our appeals, and on every occasion he has more than seconded any effort made by the club for useful reforms."

2. "Not Goodness"

Not Goodness is also hard to adequately define.

Often people whose lives are ultimately destructive consider the works they do good, necessary, even moral. They are frequently admired by their contemporaries, and considered by many as people to emulate, though they are actually quite destructive. Their goals benefit only themselves. They have impressive visions that seem worthwhile, but in the long run aren't good for anyone.

Nevertheless they are not cardboard villains, they are people of their times, often celebrated by the culture of their day:

Story: Wyerhauser

In 1900 Frederick Wyerhauser, German immigrant and brilliant industrialist negotiated the purchase of 900,000 acres of railroad land in the Northwest in exchange for exclusive rights to his transport business. Wyerhauser had built the largest timber conglomerate in America, consisting of more than 100 interlocking partnerships across the nation. This deal was the capstone of his career, adding huge increases to an already massive income.

He concluded the deal and moved to the Northwest, centering his operations around the giant Potlach mill in Moscow ID, which would figure largely in the unrest to come:

Like Carnegie, Rockefeller, and other celebrated titans of business; Wyerhausers' profits came largely from impossibly low labor and production costs. He owned and controlled company stores, supplies, and the homes workers lived in. Conditions could be appalling. Twenty men were crammed into 10' x 10' rooms. The stench was overpowering and beds were infested with lice and bedbugs. Workdays were 16 hours long, 6 days a week, and wages were too low to live on. It was dangerous work, and injuries were common. If you were injured, complained about conditions, or joined a union, you were replaced.

In 1916 workers fought back with strikes and walkouts. Violence escalated across the Northwest, and state governments intervened. It took ten-years of struggle to wrest fair wages and decent working conditions from him.

3. Philanthropy-Community

Philanthropy-community means "goodness in action". It indicates service that improves peoples' lives and communities. Caring for the weak and disadvantaged, nurturing and developing youth, and developing important values in a community is largely accomplished by local, volunteer-based groups, in response to needs they've chosen to act on.

The project organizes philanthropic groups into four general categories:

- A. Helping the Needy: Disadvantaged, helpless victims, vulnerable youth, addictions, etc.
- B. Correctional: Social justice, reversing negative trends, land use and abuse, combating negative outside influences
- C. Community Enrichment: Arts, museums, life enrichment and expansion
- D. Celebration: Gathering to develop relationships, common interests and celebrate values

Philanthropy-Community is another key thread in the film.

The film will spend significant time exploring such groups across Idaho. It will profile the people who created the organization, what their vision, personal motives, and difficulties were. It will cover the volunteers equally well: Why do they work for no income under at times difficult circumstances, and what are the personal rewards for doing this work?

As importantly, the film will explore the lives of people they're helping: What would life have been like otherwise? What kinds of interaction and friendship develop between all of them? What would life in the community be like if this work wasn't being done?

Community is another difficult word.

It obviously means people living together in a town or city, but it also means people living together in relationship, cooperatively concerned about the common good, and the quality of life in their community:

Story: Chautauqua's in Idaho

In 1874 Methodist minister John Heyl of Lake Chautauqua New York began organizing intensive two-week church training camps for his staff, adding sport and social activities to help them bond personally and grow together as a group.

The idea of these gatherings became wildly popular and within ten years "Chautauqua's" had spread across America. Secular formats were most common, and the focus had become community celebration and development.

They'd become so popular in Idaho that by 1900 the state had formed the Idaho State Chautauqua Association, charged with sponsoring a program for each region in Idaho.

Every Chautauqua was planned with care:

A typical two-week program was built around popular speakers championing reform, social issues of the day, and other inspirational messages. Maud Ballington Booth's sessions on prison life in America moved audiences to tears and emotional cries for reform. Jane Addams Hull House sessions included presentations from the Immigrant Protection League, the Juvenile Psychopathic Clinic, the Consumer Protection League, and the National Child Labor Committee.

Presentations were followed with breakout sessions, in which attendees conducted practical discussions on how this education could improve life their communities. After these intensives, people relaxed with sports programs, picnics, community dinners, swimming parties, music, and dancing.

Unfortunately, their popularity began drawing profit minded entrepreneurs onto the scene, who brought star performers, admission fees, and ticketed attractions with them. Introducing a profit motive dampened the original spirit, and they eventually died out, though all the other community organizations continued to flourish.

4. Land Vs. People

Idaho's land and natural resources are another thread. It's diverse and at times challenging geography has determined where and how Idahoans live.

Her natural resources have always been a major factor in shaping her identity, for good and at times for ill:



Story: Idaho's 1st Gold Rush

America's gold rushes were not the romantic, high-spirited, wild-west adventures we've been led to believe in; they were in fact, more like plagues of locusts.

In 1860, Elias Pierce, a Nez Perce trading partner, trespassed onto their land believing it contained gold. It did, word got out, and the rush began.

Prospectors poured in, and the first to go were the Nez Perce. Miners wanted their mining town on territorial land, along with the minefields. Accordingly, Congress took back 4/5 of Nez Perce reservation land without their consent, and forcibly relocated them. Towns sprang up, lasted a few months, and when the claims played out, the miners moved on, leaving scores of ghost towns and hundreds of empty mine works behind.

In 1860 Idaho was virtually unpopulated. In 1862, at the peak of the gold rush, Idaho's population had swelled to 70,000. When the mines played out, the few who'd found gold left, taking their money with them. By 1865 Idaho's population was back down to 15,000, the Nez Perce had lost their land, and Idaho was a deserted landscape of abandoned towns and deserted mines.

In a final ironic twist, it's largely been the efforts of the Nez Perce that have curbed gold mine pollution in Idaho today, one of the worst sources of pollution in America.

5. Big Vs. Small

Most people would agree that Americans tend to be impressed by "big" instead of "small" and "top down" instead of "bottom up". There has always been this idea that big and top down is the best way to go. But the reality is that life is an evolving, complex process. Autocratic, top down planning rarely works as well as people believe.

Because Idaho has rarely had this problem, the film will cover such programs in other states to illustrate the point:

Story: Robert Moses

One of the key power brokers on the east coast, Robert Moses, chairman of various powerful New York commissions in the mid-1900's; had a bold vision of the role automobiles should have in American life, and the power to make it happen. He controlled huge revenues from toll bridges and highway's in metro New York, and used them to build a vast network of highways in and around New York City.

When traffic became a problem, he would not accept that public transportation was a better option. Moses believed more highways were the answer. But more highways just caused more people to buy cars. Ultimately, Moses vision produced one of the most congested highway networks in America.

Worse, in 1948, he inaugurated one of the most expensive highway projects in American history to date, the Cross Bronx Expressway. Once one of New York's most solid middle class communities, disruption from the project caused most of the Bronx' residents to leave. Poor immigrants and transients eventually filled the vacuum they left behind, producing one of the east coast's most notorious crime and drug-ridden communities in New York.

6. Rural, Small Town, Big City

This thread will be much of the humanity, color, humor, and personally engaging material in the film. Exploring the diverse personalities, and the color and variety of rural, small town, and city life will be a humorous, enjoyable experience for those who know little about how people in very different worlds live.

Northern Region: **Coeur d'Alene, Kellog, Bonners Ferry, Sand Point...**

Central Region: **Lewiston, Moscow, Grangeville, Orofino...**

Southern Region: **Payette, Treasure Valley, Twin Falls, Pocatello, Black Foot, Rexburg...**

7. Idaho, Northwest, U.S. Development

Idaho's development was at times impacted by events in the Northwest or nationally, and is sometimes best understood by comparing her to events surrounding her. This would include material such as Manifest Destiny, George Stephens influence while Washington's territorial governor, the Anaconda Mine / Montana government scandal, America's robber barons, both world wars, and the Great Depression.

8. Key Circumstances, Seminal Events

Social history is made up in part of seminal events, usually created by the interacting, conflicting elements and key circumstances in a region. Identifying these defining events, and connecting with the people who either created or had to suffer through them, is an important thread in the film:

Story: Jean Conly Smith & The Sawtooth Mountains

Jean Conly Smith, a lively, vivacious Boise socialite, decided to explore Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains with a party of friends in the summer of 1912. Idaho was still home to vast wilderness regions that had begun attracting tourists.

She returned deeply affected, writing:

"Should one scale one of these Sawtooth peaks and look off over Idaho's ilimitable glory, one would see misty mountain masses, peaks in crenulated complexity, gaunt canyons falling sheer and deep; then an opulence of beauty with sun lighted splendor... and always the overpowering sense of the stupendous grandeur of Idaho."

Smith decided she'd found her purpose in life: To preserve this beauty for posterity by acquiring National Park status for the Sawtooths. She launched an aggressive campaign, writing letters, making speeches, and enlisting Congressional support, but was stopped by Idaho woolgrowers, who feared losing grazing land, and the Forest Service, who refused to give control of "their land" to a federal agency.

Her husband was transferred out of state, and the project languished until 1927, when of all people, Harry Shellworth, a Weyerhaeuser executive and wilderness enthusiast, arranged a camping trip there for several like-minded Idaho legislators. The result was designation of the Sawtooths as an "Idaho Primitive Area", protected by Idaho's Forest Service.

But, in the 1950's they reversed their mandate, and began reclassifying large tracks of wilderness land as open for industrial development.

In 1962 Idaho Senator Frank Church took the field. Facing stiff opposition, he risked reelection and his entire career to sponsor legislation protecting the region. Church's "Wilderness Bill" passed on September 1964, making the Sawtooths a federally protected National Park. More land followed, until Idaho ranked only third behind Alaska and California as the state with the most nationally protected wilderness areas.

The net result of this protracted and costly 40-year tug of war would have astonished its' participants, perhaps Jean Conly Smith most of all. Tourism, based largely on Idaho's National Parks, has become one of the five industries that support Idaho today, pouring over \$3.4 billion into her economy every year.

B. Chronology:

An accurate chronology will be maintained throughout the film. The viewer needs to know where they are at any given time. The film will also periodically include key trends and events in the Northwest, the U.S. and abroad, to periodically place Idaho's development in a larger context.

C. "Lively Interludes":

Film scene "interludes" will periodically lighten the mood, change the tone, open or close sequences, and at times spice up the narrative with interjections of colorful and light, humorous diversions:

Story: The Great Kootenai War of '74

Sometime in early October 1974, President Gerald Ford was notified that a state of war existed between the United States and the Kootenai Indians of Northern Idaho, a band of some 67 people, living near the tiny town of Bonners Ferry ID.

The original tribe had refused to attend George Stephens Hellgate treaty conference in 1855, so the government took their land, leaving them some 12.5 acres, but no treaty or government recognition. By 1974 the band was in desperate straights. That winter, an elder had been found frozen to death for lack of heating, and tribal leaders feared the tribe was facing extinction.



So, on September 20th, 1974, tribal chief Amy Trice declared war. In her letter to the President she demanded the return of 128,000 acres of tribal land, and a \$3.2M payment for the loss of hunting, fishing, mineral and water rights.

Trice then stationed teenagers to the north and south of Bonners Ferry with signs demanding a ten-cent toll for entering tribal lands. The townspeople good-naturedly entered into the spirit of the war, and lined up to pay tolls and make contributions, which raised \$4,000 towards the war effort.

Though approached by militant Indians with offers to participate, she resisted any appearance of violence, issuing war bonds, press releases, and granting television interviews instead. Idaho's senators took the issue to Washington, and peace was declared. They were officially recognized, given a 12.5 acre reservation, and received funds for home repairs and other services.

Today the tribe is thriving. In 1986 they opened an inn and restaurant in Bonners Ferry, and in 1996 added a casino that employs half the town. Since then they have paid back government grants, and plowed casino profits back into tribal resources. The reservation is now 2,695 acres, with a new clinic, highway, and community house.

Their greatest pride is recognition as world leaders in wildlife conservation. They are credited with saving river sturgeon from extinction, and have ambitious plans to restore the entire Kootenai river system.



II Structure:

To fulfill its' purpose, the film must both inform and be engaging. The facts aren't enough. The information must be made into a story. The viewer needs to know why the facts matter and why they should care.

It's the complex, dramatic interplay between the "goodness" and "not goodness" threads, between "big versus small", "institution vs. personal", "key circumstances", "lively interludes" and the rest of the threads that will make the film compelling and engaging.

The following is an approximation of how the content will be shaped into a film:

Act 1:

The film will open presenting various philanthropic organizations across Idaho. These will run the gamut from rural and city institutions, and from helping the needy to grange associations and art museums.

They will be explored in a personal, biographical way. The viewer will feel empathetically connected to the sponsors, the volunteers, and the recipients, and the health they bring to life in their communities. It will be a personal, vital, entertaining experience.

Act 2:

The film will then cut to an overview of Idaho's history. Never a "top down" creation, Idaho began life as a leftover, becoming a territory only after Oregon and Washington had been carefully crafted into statehood. Worse, because of the Civil War, there was no money for funding its government. Consequently Idaho began life as a territory with an ersatz government, no civil code to speak of, and little funding for local government.

Citizens were pretty much left to their own devices during territorial days.

But this had benefits. By the late 1800's hundreds of vigilante groups, reform clubs, unions, civic and commercial clubs, and women's community improvement clubs had sprung up in most of the communities across the territory. Some were responses to the rampant lawlessness, others to resolve community issues or initiate reforms, still others to help citizens in poorer, undeveloped communities.

Many of the organizations these groups created were eventually coopted by the state to become official government agencies.

In addition to crime and lawlessness, much of it from the mining towns, there were the predatory practices of the timber barons and mine owners, who were the major employers in the state at the time. It took years of sometimes-violent action to win decent wages and working conditions.



Though often contested by the greed, shortsighted selfishness, and lawlessness that hindered healthy community, the viewer will appreciate it was the goodness in people that played a significant, underappreciated role in the development of healthy community life in Idaho,

Further, because of this bottom up, community minded orientation, Idaho had generally avoided government corruption. Powerful individuals, institutions and strong centralized government never had a chance to take hold and abuse their power as they often did in neighboring states.

Nor, in modern times, has Idaho had to suffer through the kinds of well meaning but wasteful and failed social engineering projects so many other states have forced on its' citizens to remedy social inequities.

Just as with the current philanthropic organizations in the opening, the historic material will be colorful and biographical, which the viewers will enjoy connecting with. These people were highly motivated and principled, yet often colorfully eccentric as well.

Further, viewers will enjoy learning about the organizations they created, the good they did then, and the fact that that many still exist today, and are still contributing to the quality of life in their communities.

Nevertheless, it will also be clear that this has been a kind of seesaw battle between people trying to live good, decent lives, and the criminal lawlessness in the mining towns, rampant profiteering, and the short sighted, greedy predations of the robber barons.

With that, the film cuts to Hayden Lake in Kootenai County Northern Idaho in 1973....

Act 3:

Richard Butler, a Southern California aeronautical engineer, white supremacist, and founder of "Aryan Nations", a so-called church for the Aryan race, purchased a 20 acre compound 11 miles north of Coeur d'Alene ID, and moved there early in 1973.

He and other white supremacy leaders believed that the white race needed a homeland far from the "mongrel races". Ideally it would be located in the sparsely populated, primarily white American Northwest, a plan they called the "Northwest Territorial Imperative". Butler believed northern Idaho was an ideal, central location, and designated his compound as the Aryan Nations' World Headquarters.

Once there, he began gathering fellow racists to the compound to live and prepare for the coming conflict.

Things were quiet until early 1980, when he launched a campaign to harass people they wanted to leave the area. The first to be hit was Jewish businessman Sid Rosen's restaurant, which was vandalized with Nazi slogans and racial slurs.

That same day 20 community members met at his restaurant to encourage and support him. This incident was followed by several more.

In February, eight people, including Tony Stewart, a local political science teacher and future leader in the fight, met in the First Christian Church to discuss how to counter the threat Butler and his people posed to the community. That night they formed the Kootenai County Task Force.

Events escalated. Butler launched Aryan Race conventions every summer at the compound, to which increasing numbers of believers came to celebrate and meet other believers. Butler also used these events for press coverage to raise awareness of the cause across the nation.

Butler grew bolder, his followers increased, and so did the harassments.

More locals joined the Task Force, including Bill Wassmuth, future Northwest activist leader, and Norm Gissel, a local attorney. These men also reached out to other American civil rights leaders, including Morris Dees, famed Alabama civil rights attorney and activist. The violence increased, Wassmuth's and others houses were bombed.

The Task Force agreed that they would be non-violent, and that every time Butler mounted an event, they would counter with one of their own. They also needed ways to prevent harassment in the future, and were instrumental in passing Idaho's "Malicious Harassment Act" and "Civil Remedies Act", laws that turned Butlers' harassments into punishable crimes.

It became standard Task Force policy to accompany every Butler event with a bigger demonstration nearby. Eventually these became effective fund-raisers to cover expenses and contributions to other civil rights groups.

Some of these confrontations reached outrageous proportions.

In 1998, Butler scheduled a parade down Coeur d'Alene Avenue. He challenged Tony Stewart and the Task Force to come and heckle him, calling them cowards if they didn't.

Tony responded by making a speech prior to the parade, inviting the town to participate in their "Lemons to Lemonade" fund raising project. Supporters were asked to pledge money for each minute the parade passed through town. Townspeople and local businessmen lined up to participate.

Tony then called Butler and asked him to slow the parade down, as the slower the pace, the greater their take would be.

They raised \$34,000. Ten thousand went to local civil rights groups; the remainder funded three public school diversity programs.

Later that year things finally came to a head. A Native American, Victoria Keenan and her son Jason, returning from a wedding, passed the compound when their car backfired. Two intoxicated Aryan Nation guards, believing they were being shot at, followed the car firing on it. The car crashed into a ditch, where the Keenans were held at gunpoint and beaten with rifles.

In the subsequent trial, the jury unanimously awarded them \$6.3 million dollars for damages. The judgment ruined Butler and the Aryan Nation. He surrendered the compound and what finances he had over to Victoria. She donated the compound to North Idaho College, who turned it into a peace park.

As a final gesture, Coeur d'Alene's fire chief suggested that since his men needed experience, they could practice on the compound, and the town agreed. The compound burned to the ground while they practiced on it...

The Task Force however, continued to prosper.

While Wassmuth led the Kootenai Task Force, he launched other initiatives in the Northwest, including the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, a six state network of groups combating prejudice. Scores of local diversity and civil rights groups were launched. Numerous civil rights laws were passed, and diversity programs were created for schools across the Northwest.

And, there is a powerful, heightened consciousness of civil rights and intense antiracism sentiment across the Northwest, where there had been very little before.

Act 4:

The final act opens revisiting the various troubles America is having, from inner city crime and poverty, continued racism, corruption in the government, and the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few.

The film will also revisit several of the organizations that opened the film and track their progress. What have their wins and losses been like? What are their hopes and challenges for the future? Are they succeeding, and what are their thoughts about the relationship between what they are doing, and the troubles America is having?

By this time it is becoming clear that what's going on today is no different than what has always gone on. This is a historic process, and just as in the past, what happens today in communities dictates what the future will be like.

Yet it is not at all clear whether these folks will succeed as their forebears have.

The countries social problems are titanic and more pervasive than ever. The belief that governmental controls and massive social engineering is the answer is an increasingly seductive temptation. These problems just don't seem to go away.

As the film closes, it is not at all clear how well our future will unfold, and which of these influences are going to dictate our future.

A quote from Tony Stewart will end the film, state its' theme, and sum up its' purpose:

"You can't just stand by and do nothing"...