

Bonner County Court House, Sandpoint Idaho

by Bob Gunter

The bill forming Bonner County was passed in 1907 and there was dis-order in the court. The city of Sandpoint had a jail and courthouse but the new county government had offices that were scattered all over town. The treasurer and commissioners were renting some space from Ignatz Weil for \$15 a month. The other arms of the new county government were placed in various buildings and the grand total of rent was \$60 per month.

Building a courthouse was in order but politics and skeletons got in the way. Workmen preparing the property on 1st Street, now 1st Avenue, found two skeletons barely covered with dirt. One was in a wooden box and more likely a white man and the other was an Indian. The area had once been an old Indian burial ground.



Bonner County Court House. Bonner County residents still use this court house located on 1st Ave in Sandpoint. Notice the Power House in the background, and the entrance off 1st Ave.

Click photo to enlarge

Not to be outdone the politicians brought their own political skeletons out of the closet. The republican commissioners could not agree with the one democrat and the project seemed stalled. That is when Mr. and Mrs. Ignatz Weil offered to build a temporary building and rent it to the county for \$150 per month. It was to be a two-story frame structure and occupy part of the Weil Orchard and front First Street. That was the area where the present courthouse now stands. In fact, the house many people call the McFarland house, located on 1st Avenue and Highway 95, was the Weil home.

Ignatz Weil feared that the frame building might be subject to fire so he had the builders use brick. This made expenses higher and he asked the County for \$200 a month. The fear that the rent could be raised again prompted the commissioners to respond to Weils offer to sell the county the courthouse. His asking price was just what he had paid for the building plus a few dollars for the land and it could be paid in installments. There finally came "order in the courthouse" and a decision to purchase was made in 1908.



The Court House entrance off 1st Ave. Today you enter the Bonner County Court House from the right side of the building, however it was originally designed to enter off 1st Ave. Next time you pass the Court House in Sandpoint, look for the "Bonner County Court House" sign off the 1st Avenue side of the building, and reflect to days past.

Click photo to enlarge