

# ARTI-FACTS

*The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society*

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities  
in the San Jacinto Mountains

WINTER 2021-2022

## A Remarkable Idyllwild Woman

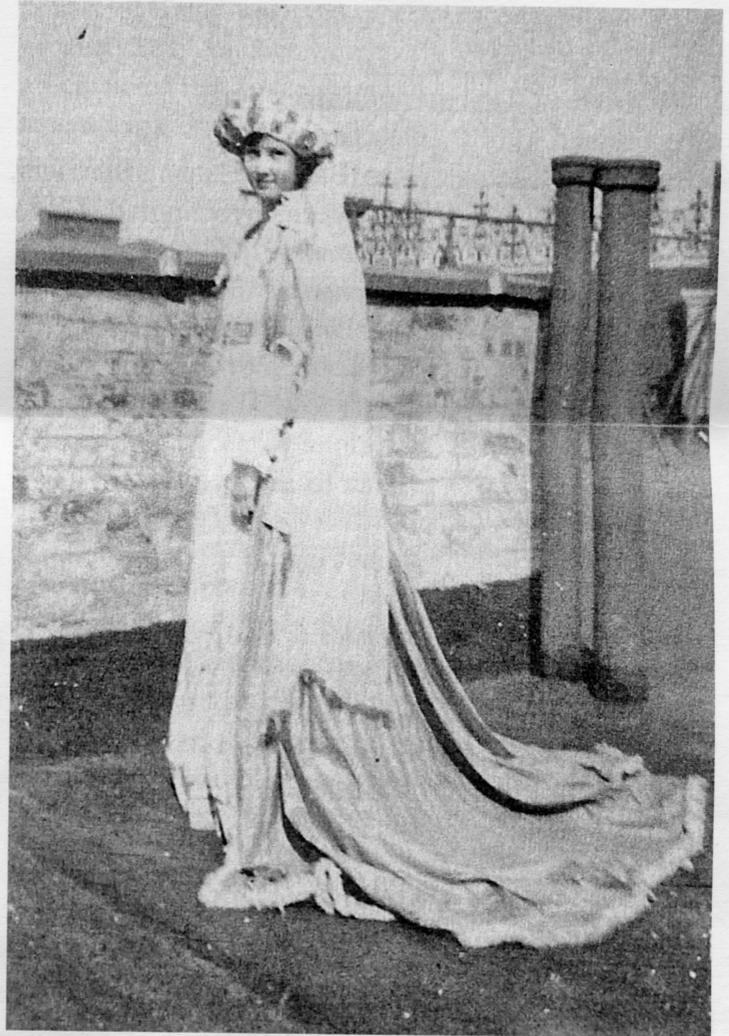
*By Bob Greenamyre*

A familiar, old bromide states, "Behind every great man is a great woman." More recently, in deference to both equality and reality, that expression has been modified to state "Beside every great man is a great woman." This would certainly be the case for Betty Maxwell; actress, metaphysician, lecturer, counselor, newspaper developer, community leader, conservationist...and the wife of Ernie Maxwell, Idyllwild's iconic newspaperman, conservationist, artist, community leader dubbed "Mr. Idyllwild" in an article about his life.

A treasure trove of Betty's pictures, articles, diplomas, lecture notes, letters and much more was recently donated to IAHS by the Maxwell's niece, Laurie Corbett. While recording these documents into the museum archives, it became clear to this novice archivist that there was much more to share about Betty Maxwell's rich and fascinating life.

Elizabeth Guernsey Beeman was born on February 2, 1906, in Kirksville Missouri to Mr. and Mrs. L. Mason Beeman. Beeman, a doctor of Osteopathy was reputed to have created the first treatment for "tennis elbow." It was noted in one of Betty's theater reviews that the Beemans were related to the Beemans of Beeman's Gum fame but that could not be corroborated. At some point Betty's family moved to New York, where Betty attended school.

Betty was an early acting force to be reckoned with. A review of the play, "Babes in the Woods" at Chicago's Garrick Theater the writer noted, "At the tender age of eight, she was noticed by Edith Wynne Matthison while playing an Irish lad in a benefit performance of ... "The Traveling Man." Mrs.



*Photo from IAHS archive*

Matthison was a stage actress who later taught acting at The Bennett School in Millbrook, New York. After graduating from Horace Mann High School for Girls in 1924, Betty enrolled at The Bennett School where she studied under Matthison and received her degree in drama in 1926.

While at Bennett, Betty acted and directed

*See Betty, page 3*

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*Board meetings are open to the membership and are held in the archive building on the second Friday of each month at 4 p.m.*

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- Editor:* Carolyn Levitski
- Feature Writer:* Bob Greenamyier
- Layout:* Halie Wilson

To all of our members,

The Idyllwild Area Historical Society would like to wish all of you a very happy New Year!

We are so looking forward to the coming year.

We hope our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Home Tour will be back on Saturday, September 17, 2022. SAVE the date!

Some of you may have seen the latest addition to our museum—a beautiful carved bear greeting visitors. We've had a lot of fun with a "name the bear contest." If you have not had a chance to visit the museum, you will know the bear's name in the next newsletter.

All of us at IAHS want to say a big "THANK YOU" for the continued support you give us with your memberships, donations, and volunteering.

Come visit us and please stay safe. 🐻

Charlotte Groty  
IAHS President



**St. Nick Visits the Museum**



**Marlene Pierce with the classy St. Nick gifted to the museum by Marlene Pierce, Charlotte Groty and Jayne Hamil. The museum was decked out for holiday visitors.**

*Photos by Tom Pierce*

## BETTY ...

(cont. from page 1)

numerous school productions from Greek tragedies to George Bernard Shaw's "Candida" which Betty named as her favorite play at Bennett. She clearly performed it well as was noted by an "eminent English playwright and friend of...Shaw" who, in an article about Betty's acting journey, termed her interpretation the nearest to Shaw's own that he had ever seen. He further added that, "Her success can be well imagined for it provides perfect expression for that candid quality which is so much a part of her unique personality." This would not be the last time that Betty's "unique personality" would be lauded.

Mrs. Matthison further assisted Betty's acting career after her graduation from Bennett in a letter recommendation to Chamberlain Brown, a New York theater impresario. In the letter, Matthison described Betty as having, "...a beautiful voice, bewitching stage presence, and magnetism and vivacity," also noting that "once she gets her opportunity she will make a real success." Betty's talent and persistence did land her numerous acting roles including "The Noose" with Barbara Stanwyck at the Selwyn Theater in Chicago, "Babes in the Woods" at the Garrick Theater in Philadelphia, and "Craig's Wife." Cast mostly as an ingenue, an innocent or unsophisticated young woman, that would shift to earning leading roles with a stock company in



"A BABE" who should be in "The Woods," according to her latest show's title, but Betty Beeman, one of the principals of "Babe In The Woods," a Taddon Hall guest, seems to prefer our unwooded shores for health's sake.

(PHOTOS BY ATLANTIC FOTO 5

Photo from IAHS archive

Washington D.C. Betty was selected to play leading roles in "Ivory Door," "Jonesy," and "Poor Little Rich Girl" during her work there.

Betty's first marriage was to businessman Harold S. Seabrook on April 8, 1934, in California. Wedding announcement in various papers noted the Betty, "has appeared in several Broadway productions." Another article noted that her recent work "has been the writing of radio dramatic features." Settling in Los Angeles, it appears Betty made

a shift toward the metaphysical and service realm. This would be a prominent feature in the remainder of her life. While her marriage did not last, it did lead to her meeting and marrying one Ernest Maxwell on August 18, 1939, at a California Ranch.

Shortly after their marriage, Ernie enlisted in the Air Force where his artistic talent was utilized to create various posters for the Air Force and numerous cartoon published in military magazines. Concurrently, Betty became more deeply involved with the spiritual community.

She became a well respected lecturer at numerous spiritual centers including the Hollywood Unity Metaphysical Center from 1939 to 1941, the Hollywood Truth Foundation from 1941 to 1943, the Metaphysical Library and Bookshop in San Francisco from 1942 to 1943 and 1949 to 1951, the Institute of Religious Science from 1949 to 1950 and the 3rd and 4th Western Conference, Association for Research and Enlightenment in 1950 and 1951. After moving to Idyllwild in 1945, Betty also held meetings in Idyllwild into 1960s. Additionally, from 1965 to 1977,



**SPEAKER**—Elizabeth Maxwell, leader, teacher and counsellor at the Hollywood Truth Foundation, 1615 N. Cherokee Ave. Miss Maxwell's subject for tomorrow at 11 a. m. is "The Radiant Life." A Victory Song Hour is held at 6 p. m. Sunday under the direction of Ethel Wenk. There are religious activities daily. \*

Photo from IAHS archive

See Betty, page 5

# THE COMPANY WE KEEP

New and renewing members JULY 1 to DECEMBER 31, 2021

We welcome new members and thank renewing members for their continuing support. Memberships have kept the Society afloat during the pandemic closure and the cancellation of our Home Tour fundraisers. We are grateful.

## FOUNDERS CIRCLE

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Jeff Wu

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_ Contributor (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_ Benefactor (\$250) \_\_\_\_\_ Business (\$35)

\_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_ Sponsor (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_ Corporate (\$750)

*(Please make your tax-deductible dues check to IAHS & mail to PO Box 3320, Idyllwild, CA 92549)*

**If a gift membership, please enter donor's name and address:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

## BETTY ...

(cont. from page 3)

Betty worked as a spiritual counselor in La Jolla where she had an office.

The topics Betty lectured on or taught readings like a list of spiritual and philosophical topics popular in today's search for enlightenment: "Meditation discipline practice individual treatment for wholeness of mind, body and affairs"; "The Common Sense of Spiritual Living"; "Preparing for Plenty and Managing Your Wealth" "Works Blessing" classes; "Victory Singing"; Reincarnation; "Healing" and "Dependable Intuition."

The respect for her talent is evidenced in numerous thank-you letters from participants in her programs. One exchange of letters between Betty and Gina Carminara of the Association For Research and Enlightenment in Virginia Beach, Virginia in 1945 exemplifies this respect. Ms. Carminara was seeking religious, philosophical and metaphysical literature recommendations from Betty noting "you to be very widely read and well-informed." Betty was one of twelve people chosen to take part in this project. Betty responded promptly with numerous books that had benefitted her "road to selfdiscovery." Topics ranged from the spiritual including "Leaves of Grass" by Walt Whitman and "The Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson" to psychic research and the healing arts. Clearly the "ingenue" had significant depth and understanding of our world.

Much of Betty's accomplishments while living in Idyllwild have been well documented in other articles. She served as the Director of Idyllwild Community Campfire Program, was a Trustee for two terms on the Idyllwild Chamber of Commerce, was a Charter member of the Isaac Walton League, a precursor to the Sierra Club, continued her acting in local productions (her last performance was in "Blithe Spirit" at the age of 67. And, of course she started the Idyllwild Town Crier with husband Ernie.

Regarding the creation and running of the Town



4TH WESTERN CONFERENCE  
**ASSOCIATION FOR  
RESEARCH AND  
ENLIGHTENMENT**  
MARCH 28TH THROUGH APRIL 1ST  
Wednesday, 8 P.M., BLOSSOM ROOM  
MANLY HALL  
"PEACE"  
Thursday, 8 P.M., REDWOOD ROOM  
ELSIE SECHRIST  
"EDGAR CAYCE RECORDS"  
Friday, 8 P.M., REDWOOD ROOM  
PETER BALLBUSCH  
"FREEDOM FROM FEAR"  
Saturday, 8 P.M., REDWOOD ROOM  
DR. GINA CARMINARA  
"BALANCE—KEYNOTE OF WISDOM"  
Sunday, 8 P.M., REDWOOD ROOM  
HUGH LYNN CAYCE  
"TIME-SPACE AND PATIENCE"  
Sunday Afternoon, 2 P.M., REDWOOD ROOM  
ELIZABETH MAXWELL  
"STABILITY IN A CHANGING WORLD"  
**HOLLYWOOD ROOSEVELT HOTEL**  
7000 Hollywood Blvd. ☎ Dial HO 9-2442  
Daily Afternoon Sessions at 2 o'clock in the Redwood  
Room. Discussions on Prayer, Meditation, Healing, Diet  
and Health, Dreams and Life After Death.  
—Public Cordially Invited—

Photos from LAHS archive

Crier, in an unfinished and unpublished autobiography Betty began around 1961, she observed "...there's more drama paced into 24 hours of editing a mountain newspaper than I ever experienced on Broadway. It all depends on where you sit."

Other excerpts from Betty's autobiography reflect more of her unique can-do spirit and sense of humor. Take this section on building their own cabin as a prime example.

"Building our own cabin proved to be hilarious, harrowing and distinctly educational. It was the post-war era of acute shortages and we scoured a 100-mile area for building materials of doubtful quality. We called a day well-spent if we could scrounge a pound of nails.

Project Cabin became an absorbing interest and we found on our infrequent visits to our old haunts in Hollywood that our friends eyed us curiously when we spoke with rapture of septic tanks and valley roof jacks. The grand climax came when our carpenter helper walked off the job just as the roof was going up. We bought a construction manual full of strange, unfathomable figures, tossed it over our shoulder and by the grace of kind fate, completed the structure."

Betty left this world on August 19, 1977, at the age of 71. Her memory was honored at a tree planting ceremony in Town Hall Park. In a letter from friend Luther Weare, who took over the paper in 1977, he clearly states his admiration of Betty after her passing:

"When my wife and I spent an evening with the Maxwells a few months ago, the conversation drifted to the occult and spiritual. Betty was psychic and sensed the presence of spirits around her. She told us of her belief that life is a continuum and the soul survives.

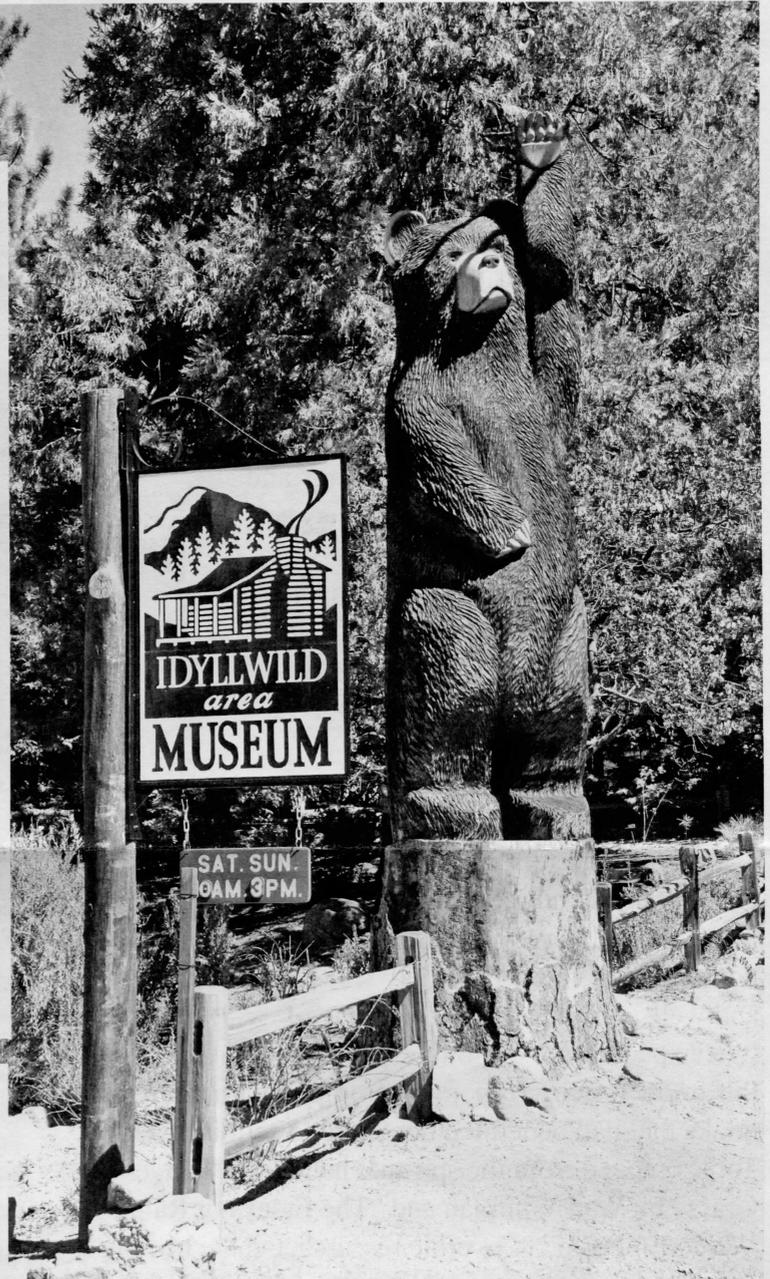
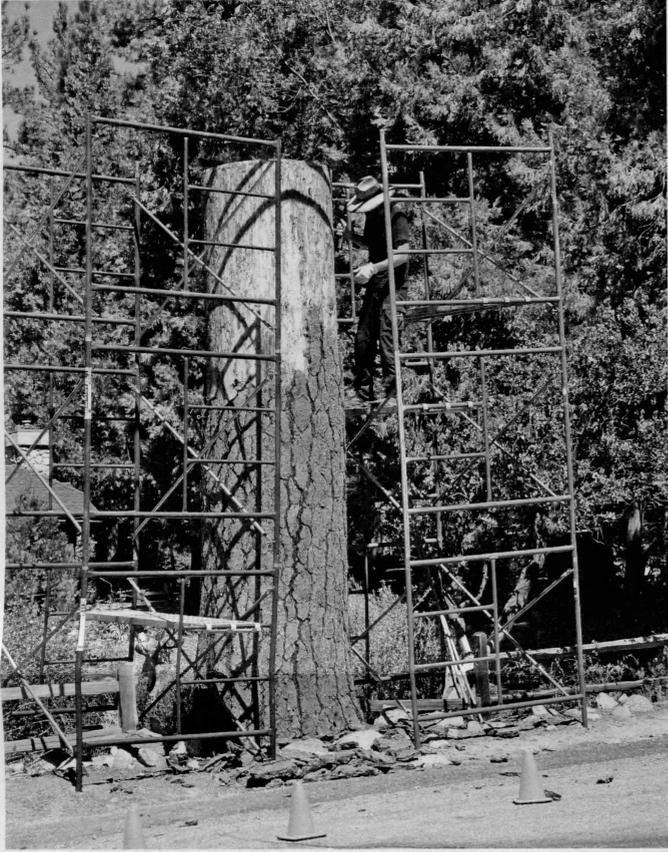
"Now if she was right, Betty moved to another plane of existence, leaving us with affectionate memories. We have known and loved a warm, vibrant, vivacious woman of tremendous sensitivity. A beautiful woman."

Nothing more can be added to that. ☞

# Have You Seen Our Friendly Bear?

From the huge, ugly stump left by SCE tree crews, Cory Lavy crafted this wonderful friendly bear to welcome visitors to the IAHS museum.

*Bear photos by Tom Pierce*



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## New Additions to the “Old Cabins” Book

Our historical researcher, Betty Parks, has added many new pages to the “Old Cabins” notebook that she has compiled. If you own a cabin built in the 40s or 50s, you may find it listed in this wonderful resource book which is available at the museum archives. Each entry contains a photo and a history of the home. Betty says that there are many more early, historic cabins that she wishes to photograph and include at a later date. 📷

# Future Events and Projects

## The Donaldson Futuro

This remarkable home has been painstakingly restored over a 10 year period by architect Milford Wayne Donaldson and his wife Laurie. You may remember when years ago it traveled 130 miles from San Diego to Pine Cove on a flatbed, barely fitting through some of the narrow parts of the highway.

It is being dedicated in April as California Registered Historical Landmark No. 1064 and will have the official plaque shown at left. 📌

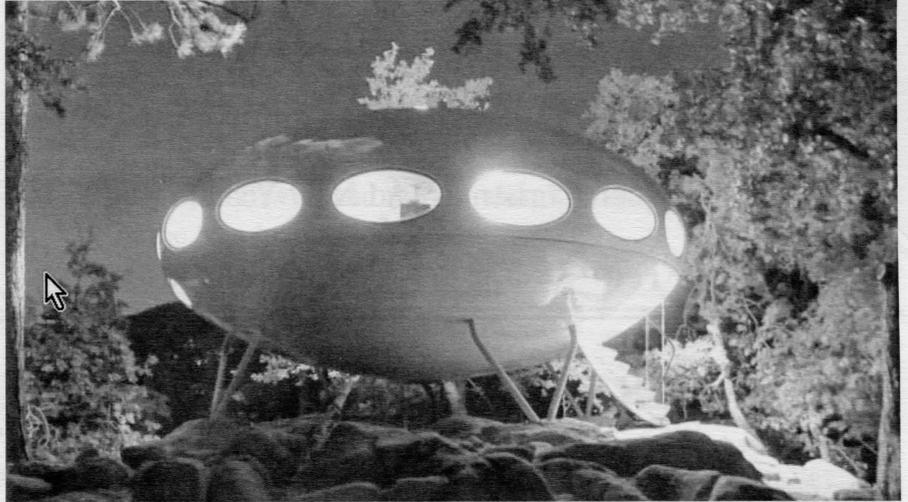


Photo courtesy W. Donaldson

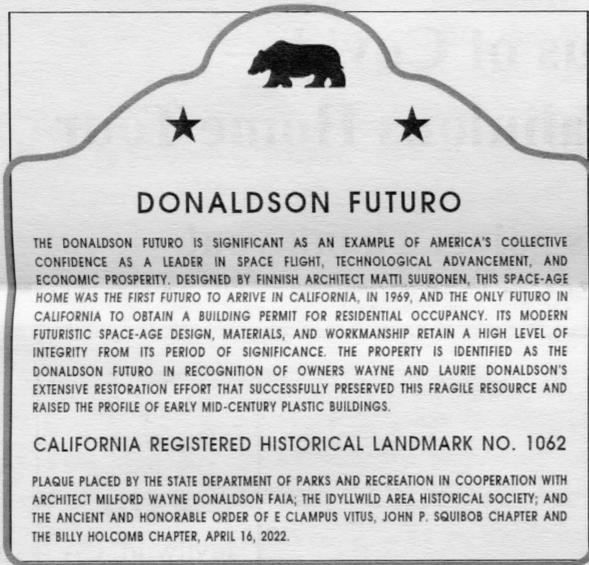
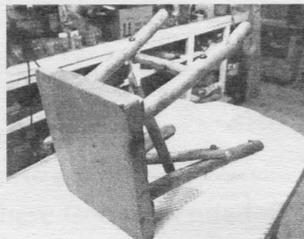


Photo by Tom Pierce

## Pinecraft Donation

Board member Ed Warner recently retrieved some authentic Pinecraft furniture that was damaged in the 2013 flood in Garner Valley. The furniture will require extensive repair and restoration, a long term project that Ed Warner has bravely taken on. The furniture was donated by Laguna resident Bob Smith and his wife. They had lived in Idyllwild for 20 years and acquired an extensive Pinecraft collection which was at their Fobes ranch home during the flash flood. 📌



Photos by Ed Warner

**Museum Hours**  
**10 am to 3 pm**

**Saturday and Sunday  
and Monday Holidays**

Also daily between Christmas and New Years

**Admission Free**

54470 North Circle Drive

**Follow us on Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety)

**Visit our website**

[www.idyllwildhistory.org](http://www.idyllwildhistory.org)

For special hours and other business, call  
(951) 659-2717 or email [info@idyllwildhistory.org](mailto:info@idyllwildhistory.org)

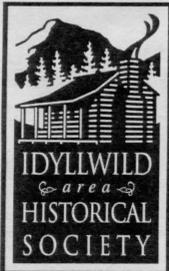
**Donations Welcome**

*The museum is now open for visitors:  
Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.*

**Depending on the status of Covid—  
Join us in 2022 for the next fabulous Home Tour**

**Your continued support keeps us going. Thank you!**

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