**Caldwell History**

Nestled in the Treasure Valley, surrounded by the Owyhee, Weiser and Boise mountain ranges, the present-day City of Caldwell is located along a natural passageway to the Inland and Pacific Northwest. Indian tribes from the west coast, northern Idaho and as far away as Colorado would come to the banks of the Boise River for annual trading fairs. European and Hawaiian explorers soon followed the paths left by Indians, and hopeful emigrants later forged the Oregon Trail to seek a better life in the Oregon Territory. Pioneers of the Trail traveled along the Boise River to Canyon Hill and forded the river close to the "Silver Bridge" on present-day Plymouth Street.

During the Civil War the discovery of gold in Idaho's mountains brought a variety of new settlers into the area. Many never made it to the mines, choosing instead to settle along the Boise River and run ferries, stage stations and freighting businesses. These early entrepreneurs created small ranches and farms in the river valleys.

Caldwell's inception largely occurred as a result of the construction of the Oregon Short Line Railroad, which connected Wyoming to Oregon through Idaho. Robert E. Strahorn came to the Boise River Valley in 1883 to select a route for the railroad, and rejected the grade into Boise City as too steep, therefore choosing a site 30 miles to the west. He drove a stake into an alkali flat of sagebrush and the City of Caldwell was platted. Caldwell was named after one of Strahorn's business partners, Alexander Caldwell, a former Senator from Kansas.

When Caldwell was platted in August 1883, its founder, the Idaho and Oregon Land Improvement Company, started persuading settlers and businessmen to move to the area. Within four months, Caldwell had 600 residents living in 150 dwellings, 40 businesses in operation, a school, a telephone exchange and two newspapers. On January 15, 1890, the Board of Commissioners of Ada County issued a handwritten order incorporating the City of Caldwell. The College of Idaho was founded in Caldwell in 1891 and is still in existence today. In 1892, Canyon County was established from a portion of Ada County; Caldwell was named the county seat.

Irrigation canals and waterways were constructed throughout Canyon County, and these facilities provided the foundation for an agricultural-based economy in Caldwell. The Oregon Short Line Railroad became part of the larger Union Pacific Railroad network and in 1906 the Caldwell freight and passenger depot was constructed. Caldwell experienced moderate growth as an agricultural processing, commercial retail and educational center during the twentieth century.

In December 1905, former Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg was killed by a bomb in front of his Caldwell home. He was assassinated by one-time union member Harry Orchard, who was sentenced to life in prison. The trial—based in Boise—was nationally publicized and featured a cast of real-life characters including famed lawyer Clarence Darrow, “Big Bill” Haywood and other Western Federation of Miners leaders. Quite the time for Caldwell!

Today, Caldwell offers something for everyone. Recreational enthusiasts can access a variety of rocks, rivers, hot springs and hiking/biking/riding trails from the city’s core. Wine enthusiasts can head out from Caldwell to the nearby Sunny Slope Wine Trail, and foodies can delight in farm-to-table plates from one of many award-winning restaurants. Caldwell is a pleasant mix of old and new, come see for yourself!