

The Liberty Lake community has an extensive history from Native American inhabitants, to settlers, to the residents and activities of today. From the late 1800's through the 1950's, much of the land around Liberty Lake was covered in orchards, farms, and grass fields. During this time, most activity occurred on the lake. By the 1960's, Liberty Lake was becoming known as a suburb of Spokane. In the 1980's and 1990's, commercial and industrial development had begun and housing sales began to boom in Liberty Lake with the creation of the Homestead and Meadowwood neighborhoods. The City of Liberty Lake incorporated August 31, 2001 with approximately 3,200 residents and by 2007 this number had risen to 6,600 residents, making Liberty Lake one of the fastest growing cities in Eastern Washington.

Within the City of Liberty Lake there are very few remaining historical sites and structures. The future Rocky Hill Park site contains some of the oldest existing structures within the City, a farmstead with a barn that dates back to the 1940's and a well house that dates back to the early 1900's. The City has designated this site as historical in the Comprehensive Plan and has included the farm as part of the future Rocky Hill Park in order to preserve and protect these historically significant structures.

Township maps of Spokane County show ownerships of acreage property dating back to September 1, 1905 in the Liberty Lake area. According to the 1905 map, the Rocky Hill property was divided between Samuel Grier and the N.P.R. Y. Company. Another township map dated 1912 shows the approximately 310 acre property owned by E.C. Snodgrass. During the 1930's the Rocky Hill property was owned by Anna P. James.

In the early 1940's the farm was purchased by Louis Domrese. When interviewing his son, Lyle Domrese, for this application he recalled that his father hired a carpenter in 1948 to build the barn. The 1,290 sq ft barn, built in a rectangular shape, has a steep roof and one side is much shorter than the other. The interior arrangement of the barn features 4 stalls on one side of the building and open space on the other. Each stall has a window facing east to what was once a small pasture. A loft above the stalls housed hay for the farm animals.

Lyle explained his father used the barn to protect his live stock, such as cattle and a horse. He said that his father had several milking cows and also raised Hereford Beef Cattle. On the North side of the property near the barn, remnants of the cattle corral still exist. Lyle recalled that his father stored oats, wheat, and alfalfa in the barn before taking them to the mill.

In 1949 Lyle's father hired a contractor to build the modest two bedroom house that exists today. Lyle's father had the original two story farm house, which was situated next to the rock wall well house, demolished because it was in a state of disrepair and lacked plumbing and possibly electrical. There was also another barn on the property and an outhouse that was demolished during this time.

When asked about the rock wall well house on the property, Lyle said that his father used the structure for storage. A new well house was built during the 1940's to replace the original well house.

Lyle Domrese was a teenager during the time his father owned the 310 acre wheat farm. His parents were divorced and Lyle would stay with his father during the summers to work on the farm. In the early 1940's farm laborers were hard to find due to the Second World War. Lyle's father needed someone to drive the wheat truck from the farm to the Centennial Mill, located 17 miles away in the City of Spokane, to deliver oats, wheat, and alfalfa. Desperate, his father took fourteen year old Lyle to the police station to see if they would give Lyle a driver's permit. After pleading his case, the officer told Lyle's father that they would look the other way if they saw Lyle driving to the mill.

During the hot summer nights, Lyle slept in the back of the wheat truck to keep cool. When it was break time on the farm, Lyle enjoyed climbing the Rocky Knoll, which is a hillside that lies directly in front of the barn. Once on the top of the hill, he would lie on the grass and watch the clouds go by daydreaming about a life away from the farm.

According to Lyle, gas was limited to 3 gallons a week during the Second World War. However, because Lyle's father was a farmer, he had access to an unlimited supply. During this time marmots, large ground squirrels, were causing damage to his father's wheat crop. Lyle's father offered him a deal. His father told him that for every marmot tail Lyle would bring to him, he would get a gallon of gas in return. Lyle chuckled, "I became a pretty good shot."

While on his way to the Centennial Mill with a load of wheat in 1945, Lyle Domrese was surprised to see cars stopped all over Appleway Avenue. Lyle recalled, "People were out of their cars dancing in the streets; others were honking their car horns and flashing car lights." At the time, Lyle was confused by what was going on. While at the mill unloading wheat, he found out that World War II had ended.

According to Lyle, his father never stayed in one spot long and sold the farm in the early to mid 1950's. He had purchased the property for roughly \$9,000 and had sold it to an accountant, George Kennett, for approximately \$20,000.

When interviewing George Kennett's daughter, Dorothy Kennett-Yeaw, for this application, she explained that her father had always wanted to be a farmer, which is why he purchased the farm at Rocky Hill. She said, "At the time there was not a lot of money in farming, so her father worked as an accountant by day, and a farmer by night." In 1957 George and Bessie Kennett were married. They spent the first couple of years living in the modest farm house at Rocky Hill. In the late 1950's, Mr. Kennett began leasing his farm land to the Jacklin Seed Company.

When asked about the barn, Dorothy reported that her father may have had one animal, such as a cow, housed in the barn. The barn was predominately used to store farm

equipment and supplies. In the late 1950's or early 1960's, the Kennett family moved to Newport, Washington. They continued to lease the property to the Jacklin Seed Company. The farm house became a rental. George and Bessie Kennett owned the property until 1982 when they deeded it to their two daughters. Known as the Kennett Family Partnership, Dorothy and her sister Mary continued to rent the farm house.

In 2000 Liberty Meadows purchased the house and barn from the Kennett Family Partnership. The 310 acres was subdivided. Part of the land is owned by the Greenstone Corporation who has transformed the wheat and grass fields into the Rocky Hill neighborhood. Liberty Meadows currently uses the farm house as a rental property. The barn is not being used and is virtually empty, except for a few bails of hay. Bill and Judi Williams, the founders of Liberty Meadows, understand the historical significance of the barn and well house. They would like to sell the property to the Greenstone Corporation owned by Jim Frank. Also an advocate for preserving Liberty Lake's history, Mr. Frank would like to donate the 17 acres which includes the barn, dwelling, and well house to the City of Liberty Lake for a future park.

Currently plans are underway to build Rocky Hill Park. This will be a public park owned and built by the City of Liberty Lake. Rocky Hill Park amenities could include a playground, basketball court, tennis courts, picnic areas, and nature trails. Design plans also include preserving and restoring the barn and rock wall well house. The City has not yet determined the exact use for the facility, possibly a meeting room and/or museum. The house could be used for office space and storage. The rock wall well house is not structurally sound and will need to be completely rebuilt. Plans include rebuilding the well house using as many of the old elements of the structure as possible, as well as incorporating interpretive kiosks to give visitors historical information about the well and property.

The Rocky Hill Farmstead evokes a sense of history, tradition, and closeness to the land and people it served. It is important that the Rocky Hill Farmstead be preserved for future generations. Most of the historically significant properties in the Liberty Lake area and especially outside the City around the Lake have already been re-developed and can only be protected through replicating the original. Surrounded by new subdivisions, the Rocky Hill Farmstead is one of the last existing links to the past and is a significant community landmark. The City would like to commemorate one of the last symbols of Liberty Lake's agricultural heritage through the Heritage Barn Register.