

# Happy Birthday

Historic Boise park  
nears its  
2007 centennial  
celebration

# Julia Davis... Park!

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**A** little less than 100 years ago, the city of Boise didn't have a public park to speak of until a man named Thomas Jefferson Davis offered to donate a parcel of his own orchard property for just such a purpose.

It was in memory of his beloved wife, Julia McCrumb Davis, that Tom Davis gave to Boise what would eventually become one of the city's most beautiful and treasured spaces. But, who was the woman behind this land?

Julia McCrumb came to Boise in 1869. A member of a fine English family from Gault, Ontario, Canada, Julia surprised her friends with her adventurous spirit when she decided to travel to the "Wild West" to visit, and live with, relatives in Boise.

Her future husband, Tom Davis, had arrived in the Boise Valley six years earlier and was already making his fortune in the agricultural trade. In 1863 he acquired land between Grove Street and the Boise River where he raised crops such as potatoes, onions and cabbage which he sold to miners. A year later, he turned his attention to growing apples, and planted 7,000 apple trees which he purchased in Portland for \$1.25 each. His property eventually grew to several hundred acres of land in and near Boise.

Within a mere two years after Julia had moved to Boise, she and Tom had met, courted and were married. Together, they worked their homestead, raised fruit and livestock, and reared six children. They were avid music lovers and enjoyed walks together through the expansive apple orchards.

Julia was described as an "active pioneer woman who took great pleasure in making the women of newly-arrived families feel at home." Often she went to greet them where their tents were pitched beside the wagon trains after their long journey across the Oregon Trail. It was from one of these travelers that Julia may have caught typhoid, from which she eventually died.

Near the turn of the century, with their children grown and gone, Tom and Julia were ready to retire and offered the city 30 to 40 acres of land along the river for a park. But because the city budget was limited and there was a concern over taxes and the cost to convert the swampy ground into a park, the City Council ignored the offer.

Several years passed and much pressure was being placed on the city to create a public park for Boise citizens. Finally, the city accepted Davis' offer of land right before Julia Davis died in 1907 at the age of 60. Heartbroken over the death of his beloved Julia, Tom stipulated in the deed that "the land would always and forever be used for public park purposes," directing that the site be known forever as Julia Davis Park, or the property would revert back to Davis' heirs. Tom died June 9, 1908.

Over the years, Julia Davis Park has changed with the times, adding structures such as a band shell and museums. Recreational amenities also were added, including the Rose Garden, a zoo and tennis courts. But in spite of the changes, the woman for whom the park is named continues to be a reminder to generations of Boiseans of how it all began, 100 years ago.



Thomas Jefferson Davis

## A big birthday coming up

In 2007, Julia Davis Park will turn 100 years old. Tom and Julia's great granddaughter, Boise resident Diane Myklegard and the city Parks and Recreation Department have begun planning a centennial celebration and a fundraising effort to underwrite future park improvements including signage, buildings, benches and other renovations. Organizers will be seeking input from residents of Boise on what improvements citizens would like to see for the park.