

IDAHO PRESS

LIFE

SEND EMAIL TO COMMUNITY@IDAHOPRESS.COM

IDAHO PRESS

CLASSIFIEDS

INSIDE
CAREERS, PUBLIC NOTICES, SERVICE DIRECTORY

A TO Z IN IDAHO

L is for Lawson's Legacy Museum



NATALIE
HOLSTEN

Over in Owyhee County, in the little oasis of a farming community called Grand View, is one of the more unique museums Idaho has to offer.

Lawson's Legacy Pioneer Town and Historical Museum, the distinguished "L" destination in my A to Z quest, has long been on my bucket list.

Museum founder Jack Lawson was a lifelong collector of all kinds of odds and ends, starting with arrowheads and old bottles he found while growing up in nearby Bruneau. His wife Belva once asked him to build her a little pioneer village to house some of his vast and growing accumulation of stuff, and that's when their eclectic museum began.

Their museum started out as the Lawson's Emu-Z-Um, a nod to the flock of emus they raised. In 2021 they received the Esto Perpetua award from the Idaho State Historical Society, which recognizes those who have preserved and promoted the state's history.

The museum is now run by the Florian family, Eddie and Jessica and their two young daughters, Paisley and Olivia. They acquired it three years ago, and all of them seem to share an enthusiasm for the history of the collection they now steward. "When we first visited, we thought it was such an amazing place," Jessica remembers.

More **LEGACY** | C2



The chapel at Lawson's Legacy, which might some day be designated as Idaho's smallest wedding chapel.

COURTESY OF NATALIE HOLSTEN



The Florian family runs the Lawson's Legacy museum, living on a property and leading tours.

Legacy/ from C1

The Florians recently gave my husband and me a tour of the sprawling museum, a collection of 35 buildings located in a picturesque setting on the Snake River, surrounded by farm fields.

At one point early in our tour, my husband commented, "It's the museum of everything." And this is true. Whatever might interest you, at some point you will likely encounter it on the tour.

There's a barber shop/ beauty shop, a barn with a huge assortment of door-knobs and the aforementioned antique bottles, a circus room, a trapper cabin, a Christmas room, a military room and a doll room, to name just a few of the collections at Lawson's.

In the house where the Lawsons used to live, a whole room is dedicated to taxidermy animals (care of Belva's uncle), and next to that is a room full of 498 "hen on nest" dishes.

(Perhaps you have two you'd like to donate?)

A long row of buildings makes up the 1860s "pioneer town" — and includes a jail, an above ground mine shaft, and a tiny chapel that Eddie would like to transform into "Idaho's smallest wedding chapel" someday.

Each of the Florians has a favorite aspect of the museum, and for 9-year-old Olivia it's the diner, which is like stepping into a time machine set to the 1950s, complete with soda fountain and jukeboxes.

Jessica is partial to the Silver City Museum collection the Lawsons acquired in 1999, which used to be housed in the Silver City schoolhouse. The display includes all kinds of historical artifacts from the old mining town, including a collection of items from Chinatown, mining equipment and the only automobile ever built in Silver City.

For my husband and me, we were a little giddy

in the model train building, and spent some time watching a 1975 Freedom Train replica making loops around a large track and inspecting cases that held all sorts of train memorabilia.

I also enjoyed seeing several Basque sheepherder wagons on the property, including one Eddie built himself atop an old wagon chassis.

I think the beauty of a museum like this — one consisting of items collected over a lifetime — is the wide assortment of little random gems. Like a set of fancy chairs that once belonged to Senator Borah. Or a lamp from the old Dewey palace in Nampa. How about the hub of a wagon wheel that belonged to "Little Joe Monahan" (whose story you simply must hear straight from the Florians)?

Jessica said they often host groups of students to give them a rare chance to experience a bygone

era, with hands-on activities. They recently hosted a group who used old carpentry tools to make their own pencil cases.

Near the end of our tour, we met the last of the Lawsons' emu flock, 42-year-old Mama, and fed her some corn. Because emus don't integrate well with new emus, the Florians

will wait until Mama goes on to emu heaven to expand the flock.

IF YOU GO

The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., from March until November. Be sure to allow a few hours to see everything. On Saturday

mornings from 7 a.m. to noon the Branding Iron Coffee Shop on premises serves coffee and pastries. Need more convincing or information? You'll find everything you need at emuzum.com.

Natalie Holsten can be contacted at nampanatalie@gmail.com.



ABOVE: the diner is a step back in time to the 1950s. LEFT: Lawson's Legacy historical Pioneer town museum is located in Grand View.

Photos
Courtesy
of Natalie
Holsten