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American Society of State and Local History  
Awards Committee

Re: Leadership in History Award

City history, at its best, connects local places to national trends. In Boise, Idaho, where an enthusiastic group of high school students and teachers are documenting vernacular architecture, history is also neighborhood pride. The Boise Architectural Project is an online archive of photographs and documentation. A partnership between advanced placement classes in two Boise high schools, the project invites students to interpret their neighborhood streetscapes—to photograph, classify, interview, and research the architectural significance of selected landmarks. Two dedicated have thus far supervised about sixty architectural postings. The community is invited to comment, and the data base quickly evolves.

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting the teachers and some of the students. I was impressed to discover a fine example of heritage education, its teaching interactive and multidisciplinary. I was delighted to find that the project was soothing a wound in a city fearing the worst from sprawling suburbanization. Since the 1970s, when builders razed half of our brownstone downtown to make way for a shopping center, Boiseans have rallied to enact some of the strongest preservation zoning of any city its size. Boise is now proudly an Idaho “heritage city” with preservation zoning in six protected districts. The Boise Architectural Project is documenting the treasures this foresight has spared. Bringing newcomers into the fold, the project teaches our community civics through history and architecture. Fostering the goodwill of shared appreciation, it honors the mix of building traditions that makes Boise like no other place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd Shallat", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Todd Shallat, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Idaho History and Politics

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