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Gretchen Hill

University of Oregon, ghill3@uoregon.edu

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Production of Heritage: The Basque Block in Boise, Idaho

Gretchen L. Hill, M.A.
University of Oregon

Immigrants in the United States have been creating ethnic communities since the early days of European settlement in North America. Tangible ethnic infrastructures were established at the turn of the century in places such as San Francisco's Chinatown. Chinese existence was more about maintaining their distinctive culture and survival in a foreign country rather than the commodification and maintenance of an ethnic identity for tourism development. However, by the 1890s "white" tour guides looked to the depravity of the Chinese and presented their exotic architecture, theatrical performances, and cuisine as 'authentic' and commodified their exoticness as a form of "otherness" unique to Euro-American ideals (Rast, 2007). This form of commodifying "otherness" for travelers to embark upon a unique experience was in part the impetus for creating heritage tourism.

Today, second and third generation immigrants strive for the revitalization of their ethnic identity. Many ethnic groups in the U.S., for example, are experiencing this "revivalism" due to a myriad of factors. Concurrently, globalization and advanced technologies have created a modern environment in which identity is not necessarily shaped by ethnic tradition, but by the society in which one lives as it endlessly evolves and transforms (Totoricagüena, 2004b; Massey, 2002). Increases in the speed of globalization, however, have created a sense of placelessness in many parts of the world, thereby altering or eliminating identities of people and place (Massey, 2002). Since identities are perpetually shifting and globalization is intensified, the need for creating a sense of belonging that has structure, form and meaning is essential in identifying with a place (Relph, 1976: 67). The rise of emigration from European countries to the Americas during the mid-to-late nineteenth century has also left patterns of infrastructures that dot the American landscape. Many Basque emigrants from the Province of Bizkaia, in Spain, were influenced by Basque oppression, economic instability, and were intrigued by the many economic opportunities in the United States, in particular Boise, Idaho.

This article discusses how the production of Basque heritage has played a crucial role in the maintenance of Basque identity in the American West. I begin with a discussion of the development of infrastructures and institutions in Boise from 1910 until 2010 to situate the reader in the context of Basque influence on the city as it led to the creation of the Basque Block. This analysis is based on the examination of Sanborn maps, Boise's local newspaper the *Idaho Statesman*, the urban development company, Capital City Development Corporation's master plan,

and interviews with the Director of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center to determine whether or not the institutions were created to maintain the Basque identity or merely a component of economic development.

Although the Basque Block is part of Boise's urban renewal project, this article will demonstrate that the transformation of the Basque Block is more than assisting with economic growth, but rather a place created for Basque identity maintenance based on the institutions and infrastructures that were developed. First, I address the historical transformation of the Basque Block from Chinese to Basque owned businesses to show the shift from a means of survival in a foreign country to Basque heritage landscapes created for Basque descendants. Next, I identify the construction and significance for development of Basque infrastructures and institutions (i.e., Basque Center, Basque Museum and Cultural Center, etc.) prior to the transformation of the Basque Block. Later, I address how the Basque Block was produced, by identifying the public and private investors and developers. Lastly, I transition to a discussion on the development of modern infrastructures, heritage representation (i.e., Basque mural and interpretive signs) to a heritage institution (language school) that maintains transnational ties between Boise and the Basque Autonomous Community to further articulate the purpose of the Basque Block created by Basque and non-Basque producers.

The Early Transformation from Chinese to Basque

Prior to the turn of the century Grove Street and the surrounding city blocks in downtown Boise, Idaho, were dominated by Chinese laundry facilities and female boarding houses and later shifted to Basque owned businesses. According to data compiled from the Boise State University map library system, Sanborn maps that date back from 1893 to 1956 reflect a number of important shifts that occurred on Grove Street. Of particular note, Basque-owned infrastructures began around 1910, which coincided with a significant Chinese population owning several businesses within the area.

Chinese immigrants during the latter part of the nineteenth century migrated to Idaho for economic opportunities in mining and the service industry in the urban center, but later moved out of state, which assisted with the transition to Basque owned businesses. During World War II, Chinese migrants moved out of Boise's service industry and mining industry to communities outside of the region in search of economic opportunities; while simultaneously, the influx of Basque immigrants to rural Idaho increased due to the demand of wool fibers for WWII soldiers (Idaho Statesman, 1942). By 1956, Grove Street consisted of nearly all Basque owned infrastructures, with no evidence of Chinese presence or prior existence in the area (Sanborn map: 1956).

SOURCE: Idaho Historical Society

The Development of Basque Infrastructures and Institutions

Many Basques began owning, building, and creating both infrastructures and institutions in the central part of the city beginning in the 1890s that catered to rural Basque sheepherders (See figures 1.2 and 1.3). There has been one Basque infrastructure devoted to lodging since 1893 that remains unchanged, other than the services it provides (i.e., lodging to living museum) (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1a. Early Photo of the Cyrus-Jacobs Uberuaga boardinghouse that is still located on the Basque Block (Grove Street) in between the Basque Museum and Cultural Center and the Basque Center. It is the oldest brick dwelling of Boise.

Source: Basque Museum & Cultural Ctr..

Figure 1.1b Restored Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga house. This served as the original home of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. Boise, Idaho. Source: Basque Museum & Cultural Center.

This building, the Cyrus-Jacobs Uberuaga boardinghouse, is the oldest brick dwelling located in the city and has great significance to the history of Boise because of its continuous services to the community (BoiseBasqueTour, 2012). The institutions built on, and surrounding the Basque Block, represent a shift from a means of survival for incoming migrants and economic survival for first generation migrants, to a form of ethnic heritage maintenance representative of heritage tourism for their descendants (Figure 1.2 & 1.3).

Figure 1.2. A 100-year timeline of the social and spatial transformation of the Basque Block beginning in 1910 until 2010. Timeline designed by: Author.

Figure 1.3. A 100-year timeline depicting the creation of Basque infrastructures and institutions surrounding the Basque Block. In addition, this timeline includes the unveiling of interpretive signs displayed both on the Basque Block and surrounding neighborhoods to signify the historic Basque heritage representative of Boise, Idaho. Timeline designed by: Author.

Basque Center-Euzkaldunak, Inc.

The significance of the historical development of boardinghouses and the creation of a Basque Center (*Euzkaldunak, Inc.*-meaning “speakers of Basque” or the Basque name for themselves) relates to the role in encouraging camaraderie and community, and harnesses identity building. Both boardinghouses and the Basque Center was a response to the increase in Basque migration due to the struggles felt in the Spanish provinces of the Basque Country and also to economic opportunities in the United States. Boardinghouses allowed many Basques to continue to speak their native language and thus helped unify Basque communities. However, this also had negative consequences for Basques. “Basques in this Anglo host society were disadvantaged for socioeconomic mobility by the lack of communication and language skills” (Totoricagüena 2004: 72) therefore, relying on boardinghouses to assist with networking for employment, short-term summer stays, news from *Euskal Herria* (Basque Country), and social interactions only while in town (Totoricagüena 2004; Echeverría, 1999).

In the mid-1940s during the Second World War, soldiers were dependent upon woolgrowers for wool fibers. Woolgrowers were “the leading industry” in Idaho and heavily reliant upon Spanish Basque sheepherders (Idaho Statesman, 1942; Douglass, 1976) which aided in the push for Spanish Basque immigrants and sheepherding laws. Spanish Basques were known for their solid work ethic and courageous commitment to a life of solitude while on the open ranges of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains, thus their work was reliable and admirable.

Early 1950's photo of the Boise Basque Center. Source: Basque Museum & Cultural Center

As more Spanish Basques migrated to rural Idaho, an increase in the development of boardinghouses and employment in the urban center rose. According to the *Idaho Statesman*, “Boise’s Basque community had pledged its total allegiance to the United States” (Hart, 2009) before the United States declared war on Germany in 1917. Roughly thirty years later, the Basque Center in Boise was established in 1949 at 601 Grove Street as a social club and gathering place to discuss the affairs of the day, participate in festivities and play traditional Basque games, such as *Mus* (a card game). The creation of this institution coincided with the “Sheepherding Laws” that were passed in 1952, which allowed Basque herders from Spain to gain residency status who were initially considered illegal aliens. The establishment of the Basque Center also coincided with the Spanish Civil War during economic and political hardships felt in the Spanish Basque provinces, and the persecution of Basques by Dictator Franco (Totoricagüena, 2004).

Playing the Basque card game “mus” in the basement of the Basque Center c. 1960s.

Source: Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Although my textual analysis of the *Idaho Statesman* newspaper identified no anti-Basque statements, documented conflicts between Basque sheepherders and cattle ranchers during the first half of the twentieth century have been noted in both scholarly research and non-academic research (Zubiri, 2006; Douglass, 1975). Some noteworthy contentions included, “The conflict between established ranchers and itinerant Basque sheepherders created some prejudice toward Basque immigrants and caused economic and political discrimination against them. Some families recall hearing epithets like “dirty black Basco” or “sheep-tramp” (Hormeachea, 1993; Douglass, 1975; Everyculture.com, 2012). Therefore, the need for creating an institution designed for migrants and their families in Idaho was further solidified as a response to identity building, reducing stereotyping, and creating a strong ethnic group identity. In terms of nation building as a component of heritage tourism, Park suggests that the creation of a cultural (heritage) center “can be a safe and neutral ground for mediating political contentions and conflicts” (2011: 520).

Figure 1.4. Basque Center located at the corner of 6th and Grove Street, Boise, Idaho resembles Basque Country baserri-farmhouse architectural style (Thebasqueblock.com, 2012). Source: Author, 2013.

Figure 1.5. Baserri-farmhouse located in the foreground and background. Getxo, Spain. Source: Author, 2007.

The development of the Basque Center therefore, has not only provided the impetus for additional Basque-built and owned infrastructures in a safe place, it has also been created as a response to conflict and helped maintain a national identity for Basques in Boise. Since the Basque Center's design was modeled after the traditional *baserri* (farmhouse) style indicative of the rural Basque Provinces (See Figure 1.4 and 1.5), the center not only became a tangible symbol of heritage, "it is a reproduction that contains some cultural traditions that have changed..." (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003: 707). The Basque Center for instance, honors both the United States and the Basque Country. The United States flag and the Basque Country flag are both found hanging above the main entrance outside of the building (Figure 1.4). What's more, is that the members of the Basque Center are required to have "Basque heritage or [be] married to a person of Basque heritage," (basquecenter.com, Accessed: June, 2012) which continues to harness Basque identity. This implies that Basque identity in Boise has a strong connection with Basque descendants (and the homeland), thus creating a sense of nationhood and belonging (Park 2011) through nurturing Basque traditions and a commitment to the United States.

Nurturing Basque traditions, the Basque Center is the home of the Oinkari Basque Dancers—Idaho's dancing ambassadors--since their founding in 1960. Here the group is performs at the annual "Shepherd's Ball" held in December at the Basque Center.

Source: Oinkari Basque Dancers

Basque Museum and Cultural Center

During the next fifty years in Boise, from the mid-20th century to the early 21st century, numerous Basque-infrastructures and institutions were established that continued to build an ethnic community. Such establishments included the Basque Museum and Cultural Center built in 1985, Jaialdi the largest Basque international festival created in 1987, and the production and transformation of the Basque Block in 2000.

Figure 1.6. Basque Museum and Cultural Center located on the south side of Grove Street on the Basque Block. Boise, Idaho.

Source: Author, 2010.

In 1993, the BMCC moved to its current location at 611 Grove Street to display the increasingly donated artifacts and exhibit development. The museum was designed to interpret the Basque heritage of Idaho and surrounding communities, starting with Basque origins in the Basque Country to their new life in the United States (basquemuseum.com, Accessed: June, 2012).

The creation of museums is significant in a variety of ways, they become tangible institutions developed to understand the past or nostalgia that has been told in intangible forms by ancestors, such as the case of the Basque immigrants. Understanding intangible forms such as nostalgia can be described as the “...ever-unsatisfied yearning to be able to return to a past time-to live and be engaged creatively in that past time, rather than just to inherit it as the ‘received truth’ (Graburn 2001: 71).

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center portrays heritage through a variety of displays and is funded, in part, by the Basque Autonomous Government in Spain (Informal Communication-1, 2010). Past Basque historical events throughout the world are on permanent display in the BMCC, in addition to a mobile exhibit. The newly created mobile exhibit was displayed in 2010 at Ellis Island, New York titled, “Hidden in Plain Sight: The Basques.” According to the Executive Director of BMCC, the exhibit was designed and implemented by the BMCC, yet funded by the Basque Autonomous Government for the first Basque display to be shown on Ellis Island.

In terms of BMCC’s permanent display, empirical evidence shows that the Basque Museum provides little evidence of oppression, assassinations, or economic hardships that were a contributing factor to emigration from the Basque Country to other parts of the world in addition to minimal evidence of conflicts felt in the United States. The tangible information on display that is conveyed to the audience is more about traditions and cultural survival in both the Old World and the New World, which mimics Waitt’s theory on creating a place that is aesthetically pleasing and comfortable for visitors (2000). This form of heritage production, according to Graburn, is constructed and continuously refined by educators or ‘cultural producers’ (as termed by MacCannell, 1999) and are geared toward a specific audience (2001: 69). The Basque Museum and Cultural Center caters to a wide audience with particular motivations, both within the museum and outside of the museum.

The Development of the Basque Block and Basque Market

Basque Block

After the 60's and 70's urban renewal frenzy in the United States, downtown Boise experienced an unsuccessful regional mega-mall development during the 1970s and early 80s, but recovered in the early to mid 1980s. In 1965, the Idaho Urban Renewal law was written to promote agencies to collect property taxes from improvements that are within a district, called a "tax increment" (Miller, 2002; Miller, 2010). Funding was available for the urban renewal agency, the Boise Redevelopment Agency-now known as Capital City Development Corporation, to purchase property with federal funds (Bell, 2002; Miller, 2002). However, the funding was quickly phased out in the 1970s. In the mid-1980s Boise's urban renewal plan owing to the request for preservation and improvement of the area by property owners, began a new transformation. The new Urban Renewal area, which encompassed the following city streets: Capitol Boulevard, First Street, Jefferson Street and Grove Street, in addition to the historic Old Boise district, were funded by Capital City Development Corp through a tax-led increment financing (Miller, 2002). The CCDC became an active player in financing new projects by dedicating revenues as incentives to bring in more projects. "The master plans often become the framework for public-private partnering formed to develop actual projects" (Bell, 2002).

*Figure 1.7a. BEFORE there was a "Basque Block. Grove Street circa 1990.
Source: Basque Museum & Cultural Center.*

Figure 1.7b. AFTER Basque symbol (Lauburu) inlaid in the center of the Basque Block-Grove St. while Basque flags adorn streetlights and the lacking of curbs for pedestrian movement. Basque Block, Boise, Idaho. Source: Author, 2013.

According to Capital City Development Corporation, Grove Street was in dire need of reconstruction and re-development due to degradation of the city block from heavy semi-truck traffic. After the creation of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center (BMCC) in 1985, reconstruction of the 600 block of Grove Street was needed to continue festivals, create amenities for participants, and meet the demands of visitors. \$30,000 was placed into a fund for public art by mayor Dirk Kempthorne of Boise during his tenure (1985-1992) (CCDC-Basque Block Master Plan, Accessed 2011). The Boise City Arts Commission (BCAC) proposed an artwork project to the BMCC Director that would represent the area in which the BMCC was located. The Basque community became involved in periodic meetings to discuss the renovations. “They wanted a street that could also be used as a plaza space for festivals-paved in red and green for the colors of the Basque flag and features that celebrated Basque history, language and folk songs, a way to anchor tents over performance stages, and amenities” (CCDC-Basque Block Master Plan, Accessed 2011). According to tourism authors, it is not uncommon for urban development projects to incorporate heritage landscapes as a component of the economic restructuring of a city (Wirth and Freestone, 2003; Firth, 2011). The development of the Basque Block is no exception.

A \$415,000 road repaving and streetscape project, created a public-private partnership between agencies, the Basque community and the property owners of the 600 block. The Boise City Arts Commission proposed the ideas to the City of Boise, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center,

The sketch shown in Fig. 1.9 indicates a (re) creation of place for second and third generations who were born and raised outside of the Basque Country. The creation or (re) creation of a place, that mimics a homeland, provides essential features that can assist with maintaining a cultural identity through a shared idealized national community.

Figure 1.9. Sketch rendition of the Basque Block. Boise, Idaho. Source: Author, 2010.

Many players were involved in the funding and construction of the Basque Block. The CCDC contributed \$100,000 plus the cost for design and construction management for a variety of Grove Street improvements. The CCDC, additionally covered the funds for the base of a *Laiak* (a traditional Basque tool used for turning the soil) art piece located at the “entrance” of the Basque Block (Capitol Boulevard and Grove Street) (Figure 1.10).

*Figure 1.10.
One of Two Laiak Sculptures.*

The significance of the sculptures embraces seven ribbons indicative of the seven Basque Provinces, the laiak (a rural Old World Basque tool used for turning the soil), stones representing Boise Basque masons, and an oak leaf to signify Gernika's enduring legacy of democracy. Basque Block, Boise, Idaho.

Source: Author, 2013.

According to the CCDC master plan, the property owners agreed to make installments over time to pay back the \$100,000 payment. In addition to CCDC's contributions, Basque families contributed \$25,000, property owners paid \$100,000, and Boise City provided \$100,000 and public artwork (Basque mural) that cost \$30,000, in addition to the ACHD providing \$60,000 towards the project.

By the year 2000, the Basque Block improvement project was completed in time for *Jaialdi* 2000 to be hosted on the newly renovated city block. *Jaialdi*, meaning “festival time”, is the International Basque Cultural Festival that was established in 1987 to honor both Basques and Idaho State's 100th anniversary. The festival, initially an annual festival, became increasingly visited and later transitioned from annually to every five years to manage the increase in participants and visitors. *Jaialdi*, a festival that has been created and celebrated only in Boise, is a component of traditional Basque festivals that have been carried over from the Basque Country. In addition to the creation of the Basque Block and establishment of the largest international Basque festival in the world, other infrastructures that were developed along the Basque Block portray a significant contribution to the understanding of heritage production that has an element of national identification and belonging as exhibited by Park (2011).

Basque Market

By the end of 2000, Dan Ansotegui founder and proprietor of Bar Gernika, who is of Basque descent, signed a contract to renovate the former Mountain Telephone & Telegraph Co. warehouse on Grove Street and turned it into a Basque market (Figure 1.11 & 1.12). Ansotegui's renovation project was an estimated \$200,000 and contracted by XL Construction Corp., in Boise (Martin, 2000). Ansotegui's plan for the Basque Market was to integrate specialty foods and products from the Basque area of Spain.

Figure 1.11. The Basque Market on Grove Street specializing in goods from the Iberian Peninsula. Boise, Idaho. Source: Author, 2010.

*Figure 1.12.
The Basque Market sign distinguishing the geographic region of goods produced. Boise, Idaho.*

Source: Author, 2010.

According to an interview with the present owner, Tony Eiguren, who too is Basque and owner since 2004, the goods and commodities come from the Iberian Peninsula rather than limiting purchases from the Basque Country. The owner's wife mentioned during a casual conversation that the goods would be very limited if they were strictly from the Basque Country (2010). Of particular note, the majority of

goods and services provided by the Basque Market are mainly from Spain, as oppose to incorporating goods from Portugal as part of the Iberian Peninsula or regions of French Basque provinces. Therefore, the goods are selective of a particular region representing Basques from Spanish provinces as oppose to Basques from French provinces or other diverse ethnic groups of the Iberian Peninsula. However, although the Basque Block is creating a place that maintains transnational ties with Spanish Basque provinces, the Basque Block is also indicative of creating a place where both Spanish and French Basques can unite in a safe place within a country that typifies freedom.

The Development of Modern Infrastructures and Institutions

Basque Mural

Two types of visual representation and interpretation of Basque heritage landscapes were added to the Basque Block, the Basque mural in 2000, and interpretive signs in 2010. The Basque mural was designed to incorporate both American West landscapes and Basque Country traditions that facilitate a cultural awareness between the two countries (Figure 1.13). Additionally, the mural portrays political relevance exhibited through the Tree of Gernika, remnants of Pablo Picasso's "Gernika" painting, religious ties to the homeland with a medieval Catholic church, and traditional ties to the homeland expressed through the images of men and women in festival attire. Lastly, the painting identifies sheep husbandry in the American West with a sheep wagon, sheep and sagebrush vegetation indicative of high desert climates. The mural, painted by Brian Ladel hangs behind Bar Gernika along the wall of the *jaiali* (handball) court and was given to the city of Boise in 2000 as part of the newly renovated Grove Street and *Jaialdi* 2000 celebration to provide a tangible image that connects the Basque Americans with the Basques of Europe.

Figure 1.13. Basque mural hung outside of the handball court that exhibits both Old World Basques and the New. Intersection of Capitol and Grove Street, Boise, Idaho (2010).

Source: Author, 2010.

Arborglyph Panel

The newest addition to the Basque Block was the Arborglyph panel that was researched and designed by a Boise State University student who wanted to combine the history of an invisible immigrant group with a visual interpretation of a sheepherder's way of life (Figure 1.14). The panel was funded by Boise Weekly, a local newspaper, from April of 2009 until its inception in 2010 (Informal Communication-1: 2010). *Arborglyph*, literally meaning aspen carvings, are tree carvings made in the bark of aspen trees. The Arborglyph panel depicts images of aspen groves with tree carvings by Basque sheepherders who utilized the tree's bark as a canvas to express their thoughts while living a life of solitude. Many of the carvings consisted of memories of the Basque Country, surnames, or political slogans. This rendition of a sheepherder's life of solidarity depicts a tangible form of loneliness and devotion, yet a continued connection with their cultural ties to their homeland.

Figure 1.14a. Basque Arborglyph Panel. This 24-paneled collage represents a stand of Aspen trees that have been engraved by Basque sheepherders in Idaho during the 20th century. Basque Museum and Cultural Center façade. Basque Block, Boise, Idaho. Source: Author, 2013.

Aspen trees were used as a tangible form of expression while sheepherders were in the desolate open mountain ranges of the American West. "Gure etxea" in Basque translates to "our home" with an image of a traditional Basque farmhouse.

Source: vimeo.com/79409653

Interpretive Signs

During the summer of 2010 before *Jaialdi* 2010, I participated in the unveiling of eight interpretive signs that were strategically placed around the city to identify significant historical representations of Basque heritage. Two signs in particular are the Star Rooming House/Aguirre Building located on 512 Idaho St. (Figure 1.15). and the former Church of the Good Shepherd located at 420 W. Idaho St. (Figure 1.16).

Figure 1.15. The Star Rooming House located at 512 W. Idaho Street was the first Basque boardinghouse in Boise. Although this building is not situated on the Basque Block, it remains significant due to its relative location to the Basque Block, thus providing evidence to the radius of the Basque institutions and infrastructures in downtown Boise. Boise, Idaho. Source: Author, 2010.

Figure 1.16. The Church of the Good Shepherd located at 420 W. Idaho St. Although no longer a place of worship, the building still stands and was given an interpretive sign to discuss the historic relevance of Basque presence. Boise, Idaho. Source: Author, 2013.

The Star Rooming House was a boarding house during the winter months for Basque shepherds that included a large pelota (handball) court adjacent to the building. In addition, the “former Church of the Good Shepherd was once the sole Basque chapel in the United States, circa 1919, before the Catholic Church began discouraging ethnically specific churches” (Idaho Statesman: July 25, 2010).

The Director of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center mentioned that the creation of the interpretive signs were, “10 years in the making” and were “for visitors and locals to learn about the uniqueness of the area--the Basque community” (2010). The interpretive signs portray text in reference to the historical or modern infrastructure (s) that represents the Basque presence in Boise. For instance, the Cyrus-Jacobs Uberuaga interpretive sign signifies both historical preservation coupled with a modern day use of the facility (Fig. 1.1). Moreover, the interpretive signs along the Basque Block represent institutions and infrastructures that are either presently or historically relevant to Basque influence. For instance, The Basque Center, The Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the restaurants Leku Ona Restaurant & Hotel (Fig.1.18) and Bar Gernika are businesses or organizations open to visitors or members. Whereas, the Heath Building interpretive sign refers to the location of where a Basque boardinghouse once stood (Fig. 1.17).

Figure 1.17. The Heath Building. Northwest corner of the Basque Block at Grove St. and Capitol Blvd. Historical documentation reveals that a Basque boardinghouse once stood at the corner of Grove Street and Capitol Boulevard, now known as the Basque Block. Boise, Idaho.

Source: Author, 2013.

Figure 1.18. Leku Ona Restaurant. Northeast corner of the Basque Block at Grove St. and Sixth St. Established in 2005, this full-serve restaurant also includes a boutique hotel next door.

Source: www.LekuOnaID.com

According to the Director of BMCC, each sign was funded by a variety of city members, for instance: the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, Boise State University's Basque Center, research and grant writing by BSU students, Cultural Center of Idaho, Humanities Council, and the Boise City of Art and History (2010). The Boise City of Art and History, according to the Director of BMCC, was the final supporter and is responsible for maintaining the signs.

Additionally, the text for the interpretive signs was written by John Bieter who is a second generation Basque, an Historian Professor at Boise State University, and author of the book "An Enduring Legacy: A History of the Basques in Idaho." Although the interpretive signs were 10 years in the making, there is over 100 years of Basque influence on the City of Boise landscape that continues to prosper, such as the only Basque language school outside of the Basque Country.

Boiseko Ikastola-Language School

The *Boiseko Ikastola*, which is the only Basque language pre-school located outside of the Basque Country is within blocks from the Basque Block and accommodates both the Basque and the non-Basque community. This particular institution that began in 1998 was established to provide language skills, written skills and math skills taught in Basque to school-aged children. The school's funding is assisted by the Basque Autonomous Government that sends Basque language teachers from the Basque Country to Boise to teach for a period of time (Informal Communication-1: 2010). Additionally, when the institution was erected, the Basque government provided the instructional materials and curriculum that follows the Basque Country standards prior to the school's inception (boisekoikastola.com, accessed 2012). Although this institution isn't located along the Basque Block, it doesn't reduce the importance of the transnational connections between the State of Idaho and the Basque Country. Creating a heritage landscape that perpetuates Basque culture and language is an essential element in transnational representation that symbolizes a sense of belonging and aids in ethnic identity maintenance (Park, 2010).

Figure 1.19. Founded in 1998, the Boiseko Ikastola is the only exclusively Basque language pre-school outside of the Basque Country. It plays a key role in sustain a Basque heritage landscape that perpetuates Basque culture and language as an essential element in ethnic identity maintenance.

Source: Basque Museum & Cultural Center

Conclusion

The creation of the Basque Block is an excellent place to showcase historical representations of Basques in Idaho, Old World Basques, and a stronghold for Basques of the world to maintain a cultural awareness. Throughout the creation, decision-making, funding, planning and implementation of the Basque Block, stakeholders placed a greater significance on this “constructed” place than one would expect than a mere urban renewal project. Some would argue that Boise would not be the same without the Basques. “...All environments are ‘built’ in the sense that...their meanings are constructed entirely by the culturally productive activities of the local people” (Graburn, 2001: 69). If the Boise Basque community were not devoted to creating an ethnic heritage destination, than their shared sense of belonging would need to be expressed in other, less permanent ways, such as only annual festivals or gatherings. The construction of the Basque Block has created a central location for American Basques and Basques of the world to come from a myriad of geographic locations to unite and celebrate the Basque heritage within an urban context on a daily basis. Whether it is Basque for a day, or being Basque everyday, Basques of the world can unite in an unbiased centralized location.

The production of heritage can create strong attachments to both temporal and spatial elements in an environment that assist in an authentic (re) creation of a place. A variety of heritage preservation tactics can be expressed through the material, symbolic and living landscape that can construct an authentic place. Hobsbawn (1983) argued that traditions of heritage are invented through a set of shared practices that are repeated over time. As heritage is produced, traditions then have the opportunity to be consumed (AlSayyad, 2001: 14). The Basque Block, therefore, has been created as a tangible place for Basque ethnic groups to celebrate and experience the historical stories that Basque immigrants have endured within the American West, and in turn connecting Basque peoples to the Basque homeland.

Source: Dave Green & www.theBasqueBlock.com

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