



Leo J. "Scoop" Leeburn at age 34, having fun while capturing photos at a wedding on May 1, 1954.

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# Scoop Leeburn's ..... **LOST CITY**

by Mary Harbst

**L**eo J. "Scoop" Leeburn was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in 1921. In 1943, at the age of 22, Leo and his family moved to Boise. Leo immediately fell in love with Boise's downtown and embraced the area as his personal territory, where he was often seen walking with his camera day or night. When he first arrived in Boise, he enjoyed riding on patrol with officers from the Boise and Ada County police forces. As a result, he was typically the first person to photograph the scenes of accidents and fires, earning him the friendly nickname of "Scoop." He worked for the Ada County Sheriff's Department for several years. Scoop's freelance photography included city nightlife, weddings, parades, sporting events, local buildings and city views. His pictures were frequently printed in the local newspapers. Even though Scoop was a shy man, he quickly became very popular. Many Boiseans enjoyed chatting with him as he strolled the streets, and were thrilled when he wanted to take their picture. In 1999, Scoop's photos that captured the changes in Boise from the 1940s to the 1980s were

## 54 livable places

displayed at the Idaho Historical Museum. Scoop continued his freelance work until he passed away in 2002 at the age of 81. The photos in this chapter depict not only the “lost city” of Boise’s downtown, but also display the insight Scoop possessed in capturing images of the area.

“Scoop’s” pictures demonstrate the rich history of Boise’s downtown, and depict the vibrant city of the past, the “lost city.” Some of the buildings have been preserved, but many that were reusable were regrettably razed. Boise is trying to learn from its past mistakes and the irreversible damages of tearing down historic buildings by placing a focus on urban, mixed-use, sustainable development.

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What are the most important aspects of a “livable” city?

“A city is livable if its focus is on urban, mixed-use, sustainable development that will protect open spaces and create a desirable place for people and wildlife alike. There must be amenities that include jobs, transportation, stores, restaurants and a variety of entertainment.”



The Riverside Ballroom on South Ninth Street was a hot spot for young adults. The building now houses the Mardi Gras Ballroom.



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Bartender serves customers at Main Street's Pastime Sportsmen's Club, 1967.



Idaho Street in 1956, when the lanes were two-way and there was parking on the streets between Eighth and Ninth.



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In 1976, at Fifth and State, the St. Alphonsus building was demolished. A state government building now occupies the site.



Books and stationary have been sold on the 900 block of Main Street since territorial times. Pictured: The Main Street Book Shop in the James Pinney Building, 1955.

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60 livable places

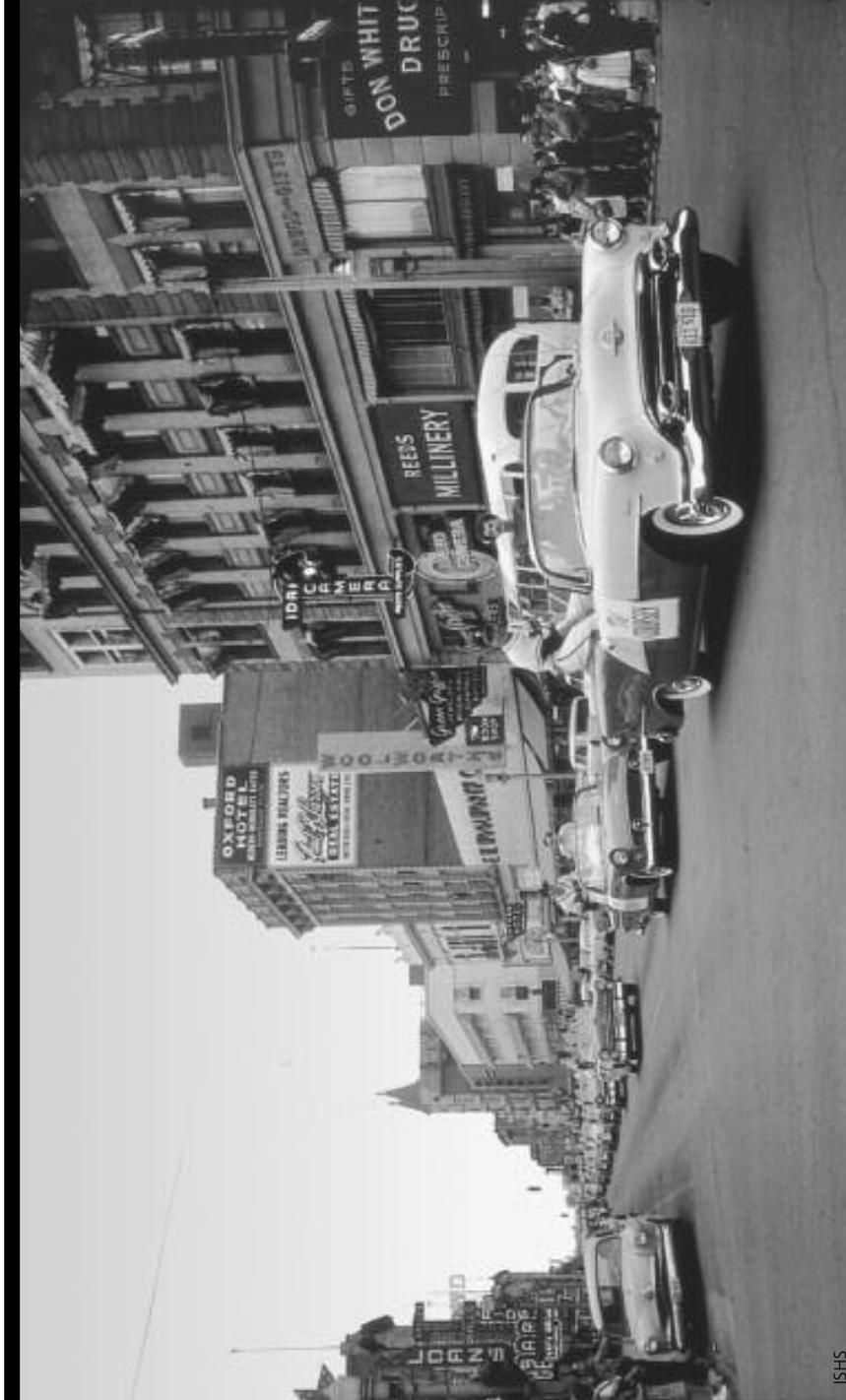


Boise merchants adapted to the automobile as suburbanization sapped the downtown core. Pictured: a downtown drive-in pharmacy, about 1960.



ISHS

On January 1, 1989, on the corner of Eighth and Main, fire destroyed the Eastman Building. The corner has remained vacant ever since.



ISHS

On April 25, 1956, baseball players paraded past the 800 block of Main Street in an era when hotels and department stores still dominated commercial downtown.



ISHS

Tearing down Boise City Hall, 1953. A flat-roof Skaggs drug store replaced the brick and sandstone landmark.



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The Southeast corner of Eighth at Bannock, 1949. Bobby-soxers played juke box music at the corner soda fountain.





Retail once thrived in the 1902 Gem-Noble Building. Today the building houses restaurants and luxury condominiums.

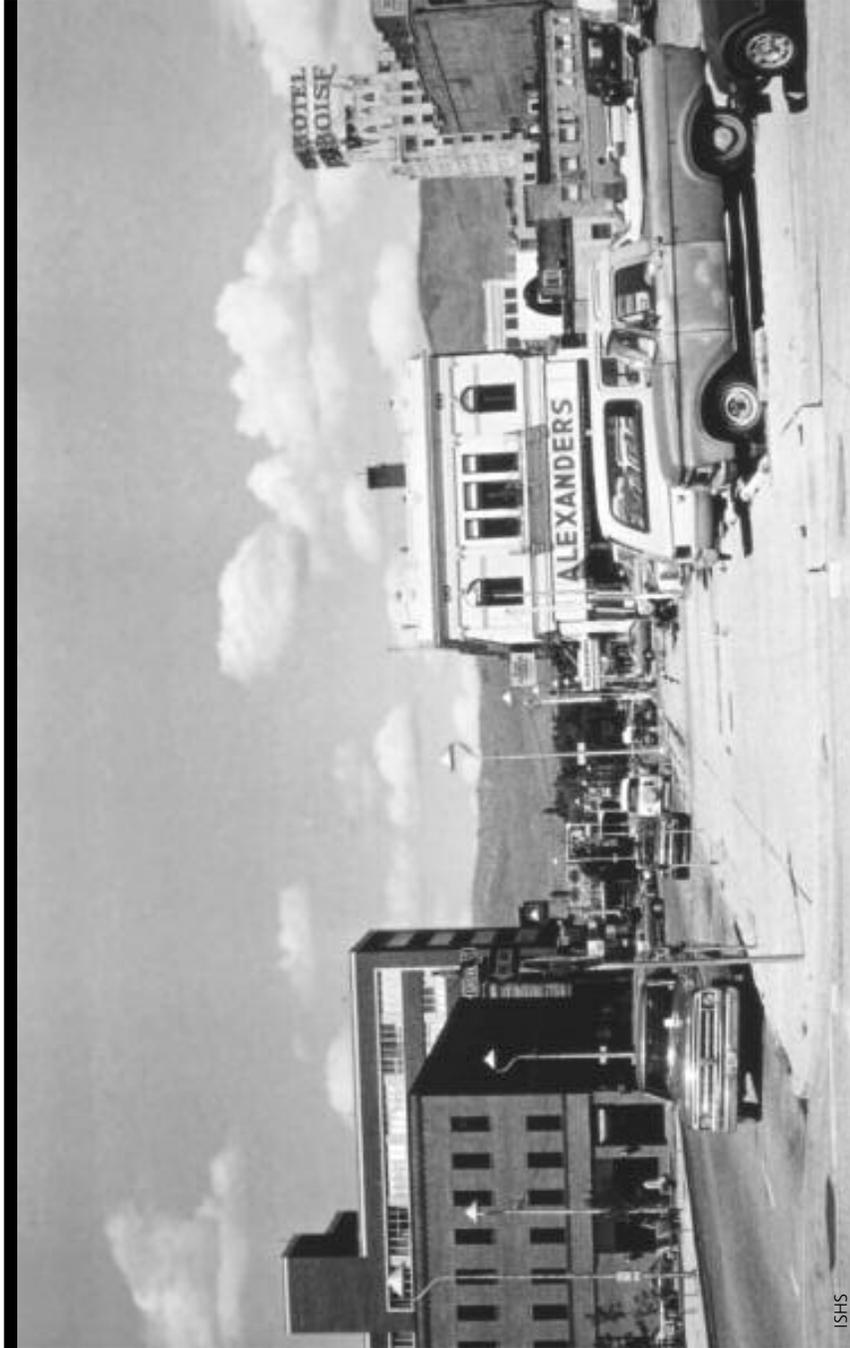
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There was a time when it was a long commute between Boise and Garden City.

68 livable places



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The parking lot to the right of Ninth Street is now the location for the Wells Fargo Bank and the Grove Plaza, a community gathering place and location for special events.



The 1929 Hotel Boise brought Art Deco to Boise. Remodeled into an office building with a roof-top restaurant in 1979, the hotel lost its signature neon sign and Deco pillar crown.