

# THE BASQUE MURAL

## THE CREATION OF THIS MURAL

The Letterheads, an international group of sign painters, painted this mural for the City of Boise at their annual convention in 2000. Lead muralist, Bill Hueg, designed the mural and Yanke's Machine Shop donated the panels. Letterhead founder, Noel Weber, and more than 25 volunteer artists worked for three days to complete the project.

## THE BASQUES IN IDAHO AND BOISE

For centuries Basques have left their homeland to pursue opportunities. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century many Basques chose sheepherding jobs in the western United States. Women followed and found jobs working in boarding houses located in the central part of Boise City.

## THE BASQUES & THEIR HOMELAND

For thousands of years the Basques have lived in a small area between the western end of the Pyrenees Mountains and the Bay of Biscay. Basque people refer to themselves as *Euskaldunak*, "the ones who have *Euskara*," the Basque language, which remains without a known origin.



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<p><b>Basque Explorers &amp; Merchants</b> Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century Basques fished and traded along the Mediterranean and European Atlantic coasts. Their affinity for shipbuilding, navigating, and exploration took them all over the world. Many of Columbus' crew were Basques; Juan Sebastian Elcano completed the first circumnavigation of the world, and Basques even sailed to Newfoundland to fish for cod and hunt whales in the 1500s.</p>	<p><b>Baserri, the Farmhouse</b> Many Basques came to Boise from small, rural communities where the baserri, a Basque farmhouse, played a prominent role. Often three generations lived together, but only one child inherited the property. This situation forced others to leave in search of work elsewhere, often leading to emigration.</p>	<p><b>Picasso's "Guernica"</b> This section from Pablo Picasso's famous painting depicts the bombing and destruction of the Basque town of Guernica (in Basque, Gernika) in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. The town is considered the symbolic capital of Basque liberty and is a sister city of Boise, Idaho.</p>	<p><b>Tree of Gernika</b> During the late Middle Ages, the heads of the most powerful families in the province of Vizcaya (in Basque, Bizkaia) gathered under the branches of this oak tree for political and administrative discussions. All the towns in the area joined in these gatherings, creating one of the earliest forms of parliament in the world. The Tree of Gernika remains as a symbol of democracy and freedom for the Basques.</p>	<p><b>Uberuaga/Aguirre Boarding House</b> Built in 1895 at 512 Idaho Street, this became one of the earliest Basque boarding houses in Boise (also known as the Star Rooming House). These houses acted as a "home away from home" and were cultural hubs where Basque language, music, dance and cuisine were preserved. The strength and continuity of Basque culture in this area today can be linked to the network of boarding houses that provided services into the 1970s in Boise.</p>	<p><b>Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea</b> This figure pays homage to the woman who had the foresight to begin teaching traditional Basque dances in 1947. Jay's legacy continues today: hundreds have learned from volunteers like her throughout the decades.</p>	<p><b>Oinkari Basque Dancers</b> Established in 1960, this group serves as a cornerstone in Boise's Basque community and shares Basque dance with local, national and international audiences. The dance troupe provides the community with young people who remain active in Basque cultural traditions.</p>	<p><b>St. John's Cathedral</b> Catholic churches are often the most prominent buildings in villages throughout the Basque Country. Local Basques annually celebrate the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits and patron saint of the Basques, at St. John's Cathedral on Eighth Street.</p>	<p><b>Jim Jausoro</b> This much-loved local Basque musician began playing the accordion in his boarding house in Nampa in 1930. Jimmy played at hundreds of weddings, celebrations and Basque festivals throughout the western United States and for three dance groups. He dedicated his life to keeping Basque music alive.</p>	<p><b>Basque Sports</b> Many Basque sports involve strength and endurance and evolved from the tasks of rural life. Here, Jose Luis Arrieta, originally from Bolivar, Bizkaia, but a Boise resident since the 1950s, lifts the 230 pound cube.</p>	<p><b>Sheep Camp</b> The photograph from which Bill Hueg designed this portion of the mural was taken on May 1, 2000 in the Boise foothills. Sheep are still trailed from the lowlands near Emmett up through the foothills and on into the mountains beyond Idaho City. Today, if you stopped at a sheep camp you would most likely encounter immigrants from Peru, Chile, or Mexico herding the sheep.</p>

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Photo of mural by J. Brian Waddell