

THE ELDERS / Oliver M. Mackey



Tribune/Barry Kough

By Thomas W. Campbell

When Oliver M. Mackey took his first tour of Lewiston in 1919 it was 3 o'clock in the morning and he had just alighted from a train at the Camas Prairie Railroad Depot.

His mission at Lewiston was to look the place over and consider whether it would be a logical spot for a new bank.

It was not in his mind to undertake a walking tour of the city at that hour, but he was met at the depot by an enthusiastic resident of the city, the late James E. Babb, a Lewiston attorney.

Mackey, who will be 94 Jan. 26, recalled in a recent interview that Babb, a man who seized each moment as it came long, wanted to walk around.

"We walked up and down the street," Mackey said. "We looked at the Bollinger Hotel and then we looked at the DeFrance Hotel."

Even in the darkness, Mackey concluded that Lewiston appeared to have a bright future and that he wouldn't mind being a part of it.

"There was a sawmill coming and they were getting ready to build the Lewis-Clark Hotel," Mackey said. "I could just feel it."

Mackey returned to Westville, Ill., a suburb of Danville, to report his findings. The proposed Lewiston bank was a joint venture with his father-in-law, the late A. L. Lyons, who was a banker at Danville.

They opened their bank Aug. 16, 1920, calling it

the American National Bank. Lyons was president and Mackey the cashier.

The new bank was at 624 Main St., and "when it opened for business at 9 in the morning there were already 15 persons waiting at the door to make the first deposits," according to a Lewiston Morning Tribune article.

"An excellent volume of business was done during the day and deposits were over \$50,000," the Tribune continued.

Lyons and Mackey also pointed out to the public that their vault "is a solid and substantial structure and contains a safe of up to date character and as safe as anything can be in these days of expert destruction as well as construction."

Stillings & Embry, Lewiston florists, sent a tall basket of gladioli.

The American National Bank later changed its name to the American Bank & Trust Co. and in 1925 moved into the new Carrsow Building at 9th and Main Streets. The late Dr. O. C. Carrsow was one of the original incorporators.

Mackey was cashier until 1943, when he became president after the death of his father-in-law, A. L. Lyons. The bank was sold to the First Security Corp. in 1955.

Mackey switched to banking as a young man after teaching school for 10 years, including one stint as the sole operator of a country school with 41 pupils.

"I got my first job in a bank sweeping out and keeping books," Mackey said. "I didn't get paid for the first six months, but then I got \$10 a month."

While he was in the banking game at Danville, Ill., he became acquainted with Gertrude Lyons, daughter of the bank president, who was away at college in Maryland for a lot of the time. Miss Lyons made periodic trips back to Danville to check on Mackey.

"All the girls in town were after him," she said during the interview.

As a resident of Lewiston, Mackey has been deeply involved in the city's business and civic life. He is a past president of the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce and was a director for several terms; a former president of the Idaho Banking Association, and Idaho representative to the National Banking Association.

Mackey now is the oldest living member of the Elks. He joined the fraternal lodge in 1911 at Danville.

"I was the second oldest until Grover Pennell died," Mackey said. Pennell, a Nezperce attorney, joined the Lewiston lodge in 1910.

Mackey was exalted ruler of the Lewiston lodge in 1927-28.

"I don't get out there much since they moved into the country," he added.

Nowadays Mackey takes constitutional walks around his home at 724 9th Ave., sits by a picture window with his cat and chats with old friends who drop by.

On Jan. 1 he and the former Miss Lyons will observe their 60th wedding anniversary.

"Why don't you sit on my lap for a picture?" Mackey said, grinning at Mrs. Mackey.

"Oh, you," she replied.