

Nez Perce

National Historical Park
Idaho

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Of Myths, Traditions, and Conflict

For thousands of years the valleys, prairies, and plateaus of north central Idaho and adjacent Oregon and Washington have been home to the Nez Perce people. Today 24 separate sites across the Idaho countryside commemorate the legends and history of the Nez Perces and the explorers, fur traders, missionaries, soldiers, settlers, gold miners, loggers, and farmers who moved through or into the area. As you travel from site to site you will gradually develop a sense of the rich and diverse cultural history they represent. To the Nez Perces one of the most important places is the Heart of the Monster where their mythology says they were created. The Monster who lived there was killed and dismembered by Coyote, an important figure in Nez Perce legend. As Coyote flung the pieces to the other parts of the land, different peoples sprang up. When he finished, he realized that he had made no people for the land where he stood, so he took the monster's heart and squeezed the blood out of it. These drops mingled with the earth and became the Ne-Mee-Poo, the Nez Perces.

The Nez Perces lived in the valleys of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers and their tributaries. They fished the streams, hunted in the woodlands, and dug the bulbs of the camas lily on the high plateaus. Often several villages formed a loose confederation, or band, so that resources could be pooled for a long hunting trip or for war. In the early 1700s, the Nez Perces acquired the horse and their increased mobility added new dimensions to their age-old ways and forged new ones.

By the time of the American Revolution, the Nez Perces had begun to feel the impact of a new people from another land. Their first meeting with the whites took place in September 1805 when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led a small group across the Bitterroots into Nez Perce Country. The Nez Perces

received them graciously, gave them supplies, and told them about the river route to the Pacific.

The expedition stayed among the Nez Perces for almost a month, resting and building wooden canoes for the trip. The next spring Lewis and Clark passed through the area on their way back east, where their reports encouraged other whites to move west. Soon fur trappers and traders, both British and American, entered the region. In the 1840s settlers began to make their way westward along the Oregon Trail, and in 1846 the Nez Perces found themselves living within U.S. boundaries when the United States and Great Britain divided the Oregon Country along the 49th Parallel. By this time, the Nez Perces had come under an influence that was to have a lasting effect: the Christian missionaries. The missionaries believed that the Indians would be best served if they completely abandoned their traditional ways and adopted the white man's religion and culture, including his farming methods. These forces imposing change and new ways on the Nez Perces intensified as political developments began to affect them, too.

Washington Territory, which included all of Idaho and part of Montana, was formed in 1853, and its governor, Isaac Stevens, wanted to put all Indian tribes on reservations. To this end, he called the Nez Perce leaders to a council at Walla Walla in May and June 1855. Stevens proposed a reservation that preserved the Nez Perce homeland almost intact except for some border areas where no villages were located. The Nez Perces reluctantly signed the treaty.

This treaty did not last long, however, for the discovery of gold on the Nez Perce Reservation in 1860 raised calls from the whites for a smaller reservation that would exclude the gold

fields. So in 1863 a new reservation, containing only one-tenth of the land originally set aside, was proposed to the tribe. Lawyer, a pro-American, Christian leader, and his followers accepted the plan and signed the treaty. Other Nez Perce leaders rejected it, giving rise to the "treaty" and "non-treaty" designation of the respective factions.

The Americans, claiming that Lawyer represented the entire tribe, asserted that the agreement was binding on all, but to the Nez Perces, this was not true, or even possible. Lawyer could only sign away his land, no one else's. After President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty in 1867, the U.S. Government launched a campaign to move all the Nez Perces onto the reservation. The Nez Perce leaders who had not signed the treaty and who lived off the new reservation ignored the orders. Foremost among them was Old Joseph, who led a band that lived in Oregon's Walliowa Valley. Young Joseph, who succeeded his father, hoped that a peaceful solution could be found, for he did not wish to go to war or to leave his home. In May 1877, the non-treaty Nez Perces were told that the U.S. Army would forcibly move them onto the reservation. So in early June, Joseph and his people crossed the Snake River into Idaho and camped near Tolo Lake while preparing to move onto the reservation by the June 14 deadline. On the morning of June 13 three young men, angered at what was happening and seeking revenge for the murder by a white man of one of their fathers, rode out into the dawn. By midday of June 14 they had killed four settlers. Joined by 17 others, the group killed 14 or 15 whites in the next two days. Knowing that Gen. Oliver O. Howard would retaliate, the Indians headed for White Bird Canyon. There on June 17, 1877, a small body of warriors imposed a crushing defeat on a superior force of soldiers, killing 34 and losing none. Skirmishes at Cottonwood in early July and a battle on the Clearwater on July 11 and

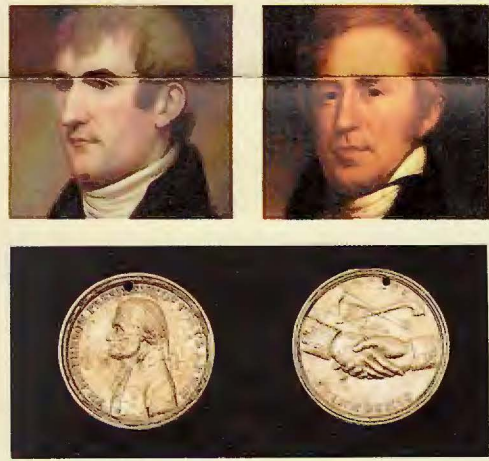
12 proved inconclusive. At Weippe the non-treaties decided to cross Lolo Pass into Montana in the hope that they could escape the war and live there in peace. The bands, totaling about 750 men, women, and children, hoped also that their buffalo-hunting friends, the Crows, would help them.

In all their hopes they were disappointed. More and more soldiers came after them, eventually totaling more than 2,000. Instead of helping, the Crows harassed them. At Big Hole, August 9 and 10, they lost between 60 and 90 in a surprise attack by U.S. troops and volunteers. Still they managed to elude the U.S. Army until October when they were forced to surrender just 68 kilometers (42 miles) short of the Canadian boundary and refuge.

The last years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th were difficult ones for the Nez Perces. White values and culture were forced upon them by the missionaries and government officials. The General Allotment Act of 1887 aimed at giving individual Indians title to anywhere between 16 and 65 hectares (40 and 160 acres)—the Nez Perce average was 36 hectares (90 acres)—in the belief that ownership of land would more swiftly assimilate them into the mainstream of American life. The unallotted land was sold to the general public. Shortly more than 70 percent of the reservation lands was in white ownership.

In the 20th century, the Nez Perces have taken steps toward self-government and have revived an interest in their heritage. From this has come an appreciation of centuries-old ways and traditions. And this park, established in 1965, has managed to increase appreciation among all Americans of the Nez Perces' history and culture.

Indians, Explorers, Soldiers, and Settlers



In 1803 the United States purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France. The next year President Thomas Jefferson sent two fellow Virginians, Meriwether Lewis (top left) and William Clark (top right), to explore the country. Along the way they distributed peace medals

(above) from President Jefferson to the Indian leaders they met. The expedition, 1804-06, provided the first reliable information about the trans-Mississippi West.



For special ceremonies and festive occasions the Nez Perces used elk teeth, bear claws, porcupine quills, shells, feathers, glass beads, bells, and tanned skins to make clothing of great beauty. Examples of this fine craftsmanship are displayed at the Spalding visitor center.



In the early years of the 18th century, the Nez Perces acquired the horse. The river valleys and high plateaus, lush with grasses, were ideal for raising horses. The Nez Perces, unlike most other tribes, practiced selective breeding, and in just a few generations they had built up vast

herds of excellent horses. With the horse, the Nez Perces were able to extend the boundaries of their world. More and more frequently they journeyed across the Bitterroots to hunt buffalo on the Plains. With the increased mobility that the horse brought them, the boundaries of their

world were pushed back. New trading partners opened up areas even further afield. With additions to their material culture, new ideas came to the Nez Perces, some of which they adopted.



General Travel Information

Facilities and Services
The 24 sites of Nez Perce National Historical Park are located in the counties of Clearwater, Idaho, Lewis, and Nez Perce in north central Idaho. This area has great diversity in topography, rainfall, vegetation, and scenery.

Touring this park is unlike traveling in most parks, for this one is as much an idea as it is actual physical property. In some cases the idea is the stronger force, for the physical remains of the past have either disappeared or the original appearance has been greatly altered. Through the diversity of the sites and the gradual accumulation of information as you tour them, you can come to appreciate the human history of this re-

gion. A driving tour of the sites and a map are on the reverse side of this folder. Sites 23 and 24 are shown on the small map above.

Park headquarters is located at Spalding, 18 kilometers (11 miles) east of Lewiston. Stop at the visitor center to orient yourself to the park and its story. The uniformed staff can answer your questions, whether they pertain to the history of the region and the Nez Perces or how to get around and find the services that you need. The visitor center contains a Museum of Nez Perce Culture and an auditorium where films and interpretive talks are given.

Interpretive shelters at East Kamiah and White

Bird Battlefield tell the story of events at each location. The shelter at White Bird presents a panoramic view of the battlefield. From this point you can get an idea of how the battle occurred and how skillfully the Nez Perces used the terrain to defeat the U.S. Army. At East Kamiah the exhibits explain the Heart of the Monster—the Place of Beginning for the Nez Perces. An audio station recounts the legend. Picnic tables and restrooms are located here.

Nez Perce National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For more information, write to the superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 93 Spalding, Idaho 83551.

Major highways connect north central Idaho to the rest of the Nation. U.S. 12 is the principal east-west road and U.S. 95 goes north and south. Two airlines, Cascade Airways and Horizon Air provide daily service to Lewiston. Greyhound Bus Lines also serves the region. The nearest rail passenger connections are at Spokane, Washington, Pendleton, Oregon, and at Boise, Idaho.



Park rangers can answer most of your questions or know where to find the information you need quickly. Seek them out when you have a question.

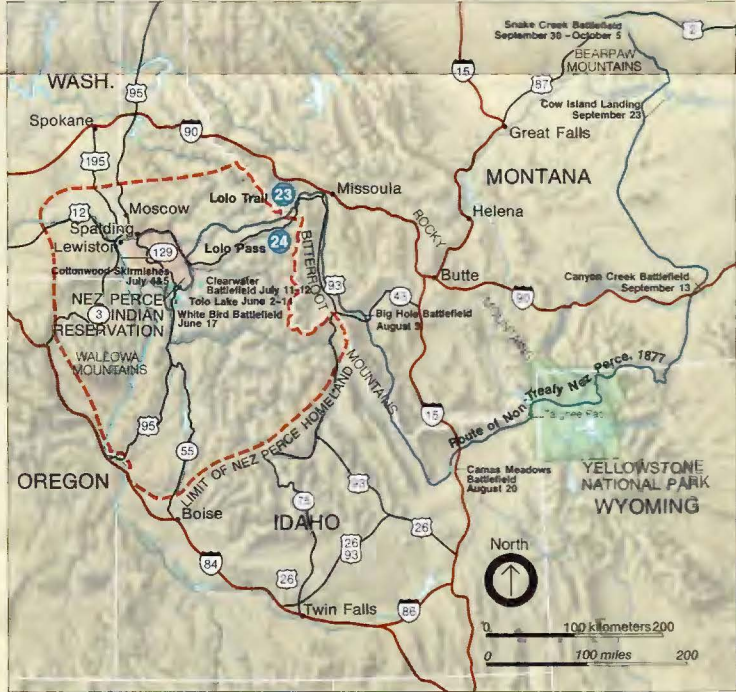
Accommodations and Services
Towns where you can expect to find motels are few and far between, so think about your night's lodging ahead of time. Tourist accommodations spanning the range of facilities and prices are located in Lewiston, Orofino, Kamiah, Grangeville, and Kootenai in Idaho, Clarkston in Washington, and Joseph and Enterprise in Oregon. Restaurants, grocery stores, and service stations can be found throughout the region. And many towns have outfitters' stores for those planning to go into the backcountry. Local information centers will be glad to help you find accommodations.



The White Bird interpretive shelter, high above the battlefield, has exhibits that explain the sequence of the battle.

Camping and Hiking
Opportunities for backpacking and camping are almost unlimited. The National Forests in the area—Clearwater and Nez-perce in Idaho and Walliowa-Whitman in Oregon—have many trails and campgrounds. The Army Corps of Engineers has some day use parks along the Snake and Clearwater Rivers in Lewiston and Clarkston, and campgrounds at Dworshak Reservoir on the North Fork of the Clearwater River. Many of the Dworshak campsites can be reached only by boat. The Washington, Idaho, and Oregon State Parks in the area also have camping areas. For those who wish a trip deep into the forest, the area offers several wilderness and primitive areas. Those closest

to the park are, in Idaho, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness south of the Lochsa River and east of Kamiah, the Idaho Primitive Area, the Salmon River Breaks Primitive Area, and the Gospel Hump Wilderness, all southeast of Grangeville, and in Oregon, the Eagle Cap Wilderness south of Walliowa Lake. Private campgrounds, also, can be found throughout the area. Some provide utility hookups and dump stations.



This map of Nez Perce Country serves several purposes. First, it shows the extent of the ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce people through all of central Idaho to southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon. The treaty of 1855 set aside almost this entire area as a reservation for the Nez Perces. The discovery of gold just five years later led to a new treaty that was finally ratified in 1867. The area of the reservation established by this treaty is shown. It is one-tenth the size of the reservation of 1855.

The important sites of the Nez Perce War of 1877 are also shown on the map. The route that the non-treaties followed from battle to battle in the futile hope of finding aid and refuge is depicted. Beyond Idaho and the confines of Nez Perce National Historical Park are two other parks administered by the National Park Service that

preserve sites connected with the epic retreat. One is Big Hole National Battlefield in western Montana. Here the Nez Perces were surprised by U.S. troops and volunteers led by Col. John Gibbon. The Nez Perces suffered heavy losses but after a fierce counterattack, escaped. For more information, write to the superintendent, Big Hole National Battlefield, P.O. Box 237, Wisdom, MT 59761.

The second park is Yellowstone National Park, which at the time of the war had been a national park for only five years. Here the Nez Perces hoped to elude the Army by sending them on a false trail. Their ruses worked and the Nez Perces headed out onto the Plains. For more information, write to the superintendent, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190.

The map also shows the locations of four sites 23

and 24. A description of these two locations is given in "Touring Nez Perce Country" on the reverse side of this folder. By no means does this map show any but the major roads through this region. For more complete information you should consult road maps produced by oil companies or by the states.



Though Chief Joseph was but one of many Nez Perce leaders, the events of the 1877 war brought his abilities to the fore. He remains a much admired figure, noted for his leadership, compassion, and love of his land.



Missionaries, humanitarians, and government officials all believed that the Nez Perces would succeed only if they abandoned their ways and accepted white values. To that end children were sent to schools where this philosophy was practiced. The picture above shows two girls who attended

one of these mission schools. Despite the training they received, the girls continued to play, when given a chance, with the toys and the games associated with their traditional culture.



Of the missionaries to the Nez Perces, Henry Spalding was one of the most well known and also one of the most controversial. From 1836 to 1874, when he died, Spalding spent 16 years working among the Nez Perces.



Site of the Northern Idaho Indian Agency for more than 40 years, Spalding—then called Lapwai—was a bustling settlement. In 1904, the agency moved to abandoned Fort Lapwai and things quieted down in Spalding. Today park headquarters and the visitor center are located here. You should make

the visitor center your first stop, where you can get useful information for planning your trip around the park. Watson's Store, a part of the village, has been restored to its 1910-30 appearance.

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Camas Prairie



Visitor Center, Spalding



Heart of the Monster, East Kamiah



St. Joseph's Mission



White Bird Battlefield



Bluffs above Clearwater Battlefield

Touring Nez Perce Country

Twenty-four separate sites constitute Nez Perce National Historical Park. Road markers indicate when you are approaching one of them. Two crossed feathers indicate the National Park Service number for the site. A complete tour of all the sites is about a 640-kilometer (400-mile) trip, so you may want to tour only segments. Most of the sites are along busy highways, so be careful as you pull off and on the road. The locations of sites 23 and 24 are shown on the small map on the front side of this folder.

1. Donald MacKenzie's Pacific Fur Company Trading Post
Somewhere on the north shore of the Clearwater—the exact site is unknown—Donald MacKenzie established a trading post in August 1812. The post

was part of John Jacob Astor's plan to counter the work of the North West Company and of Hudson's Bay Company. The effort, however, failed and MacKenzie sold out to the British.

2. Coyote's Fishnet
Nez Perce tradition abounds with tales of the exploits of Coyote. Once he was fishing with a large net in the Clearwater. Black Bear happened to come by and angered Coyote, who stalked out of the water, hurled his fishnet up on the hill to the south side, flung Black Bear far up the hill on the north side, and turned him into stone. Both are still visible.

3. Ant and Yellowjacket
This legend also deals with Coyote, who tried to settle an argument between Ant and Yellowjacket. They paid no at-



Nez Perce Dancer

tention to Coyote, so he turned them to stone just as their backs were arched with their jaws locked in combat

4. Spalding
Henry and Eliza Spalding established a mission here, close to today's park headquarters.

5. Spalding Home
Henry and Eliza Spalding first settled in this general area when they arrived in Nez Perce Country in November 1836.

6. Northern Idaho Indian Agency
As part of treaty agreements, the U.S. Government set up an agency to handle the Indians' affairs. Originally located at Spalding, the agency was relocated in 1904 to the site of Fort Lapwai.

7. Fort Lapwai
In the fall of 1862 a de-

tachment of volunteers arrived in the Lapwai valley, south of Spalding's mission, and chose a location for their fort. This duplex officers' quarters at the southwest end of the parade ground was built in 1883.

8. Craig Donation Land Claim
This is the site of the first claim by a white settler in Idaho. William Craig was a mountain man, an interpreter, and friend of the Nez Perces.

9. St. Joseph's Mission
This was the first Roman Catholic mission among the Nez Perces. It was dedicated on September 8, 1874, by Father Joseph Cataldo, who had built it.

10. Cottonwood Skirmishes
After skirmishes with the U.S. Army and volunteers here on July 3 and 5,

1877, the main body of the Nez Perces was able to flee to the east into the valley of the Middle Fork of the Clearwater.

11. Weis Rockshelter
More than 8,000 years ago man first made this home. The locale was continuously inhabited until about 600 years ago, when these ancestors of the Nez Perces probably moved to the mouth of Rocky Canyon, a short distance away. The site is 11 kilometers (7 miles) from U.S. 95 on a gravel road.

12. Camas Prairie
Here, where wheat fields stretch to the horizon today, camas lilies once grew in great profusion. Camas bulbs were a major food source for the Nez Perces, and they came here in late spring and early summer to dig them. It was from a camp near

Tolo Lake, which can be seen in the distance to the northwest, that three young Nez Perces rode off on a raid that was the prelude to war.

13. White Bird Battlefield
On June 17, 1877, the first battle of the Nez Perce War was fought here. Thirty-four soldiers were killed, while the Nez Perces lost none. At the visitor center in Spalding, you can buy a pamphlet that will direct you on the self-guiding auto tour of the battlefield.

14. Clearwater Battlefield
On July 11 Gen. O. O. Howard crossed the Clearwater and hoped to take the Nez Perces by surprise. His hopes came to naught, and the fighting ended with the Nez Perces withdrawing.

15. East Kamiah
This is the location of the

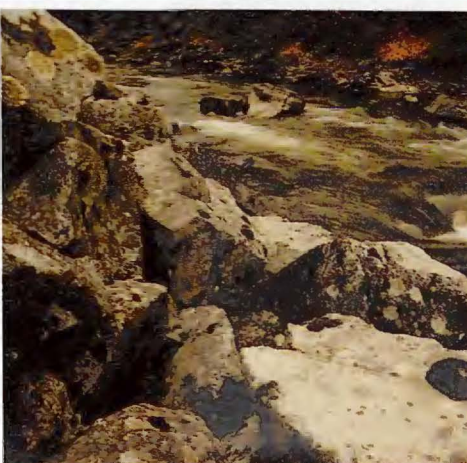
Heart of the Monster, the place of creation in Nez Perce mythology. An audio station nearby tells the legend.

16. Asa Smith Mission
In April 1839 Rev. and Mrs. Asa Smith established a mission in the Kamiah area. Unsatisfied to the demands of such work, the Smiths left in 1841.

17. Lewis and Clark Long Camp
Here Lewis and Clark camped in the spring of 1806 while they waited for the snow in the mountain passes to melt.

18. Canoe Camp
At this site Lewis and Clark rested and built canoes of hollowed-out logs for the final leg of their trip to the Pacific.

19. Lenore
For perhaps 10,000 years this site has been inhab-



Along the Clearwater River

ited by Nez Perces and their ancestors.

20. Weippe Prairie
This was a favorite gathering place for the Nez Perces. It was here on September 20, 1805, that Lewis and Clark first met the Nez Perces. During the 1877 War, the Nez Perces came here after the Battle of the Clearwater and held a council to decide what to do.

21. Pierce
One site here marks the spot, at the north end of town, of the first gold strike by W. F. Bassett in September 1860. The other site of interest is the old Shoshone County courthouse, one block east of Main Street, completed in 1862.

22. Musselshell Meadow
For many generations Nez Perces have come here in the late spring to

dig the bulb of the camas lily, a major food source.

23. and 24. Lolo Trail and Pass
This historic Nez Perce trail (see map on other side), used by Lewis and Clark in 1805 and 1806, extends roughly from near Weippe to Lolo Pass. In many places the exact route is unknown. U.S. 12 closely parallels the route. During the 1877 War the Nez Perces followed the trail to Lolo Pass and on into Montana. The U.S. Forest Service maintains a seasonal visitor center at Lolo Pass and the Lochsa Historical Ranger Station on U.S. 12, east.

