

Nez Perce

National Historical Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



SPALDING SITE

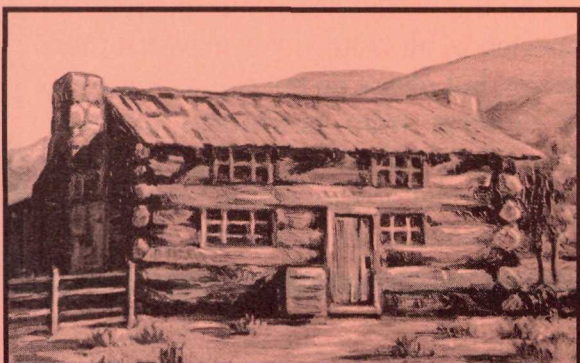
The Spalding Site, located along U.S. Highway 95, is home to the Headquarters of Nez Perce National Historical Park. A modern Visitor Center offers a fine museum collection, movie on the history of the Nez Perce people and a small gift shop. The 99 acre site contains historic cemeteries and buildings, interpretive signs and a large picnic area.

The present day community and park area of Spalding (officially named in 1897) was originally called Lapwai and served as a traditional homesite for over 11,000 years to the Thlep-thlep-weyma band of Nez Percés. Each summer they moved to higher elevations to hunt, fish, gather roots, berries and other wild foods, returning each fall in time for the salmon 'run' on the Clearwater River. The location was ideal where Lapwai Creek flowed into the Clearwater River. A large boomground where trees and branches washed downstream by spring floods were deposited provided enough firewood for a village of over 200 people. Winters were usually milder at this 700-foot elevation and the bluffs provided shelter from the winds and storms.

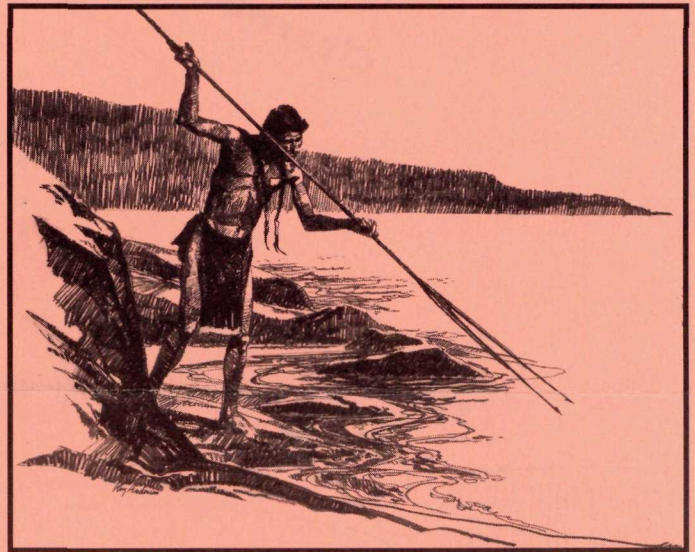
By the late 1800's Spalding was a thriving community with an Indian Agency, hotels, stores, church, blacksmith, saloon and a railroad station (called 'Joseph'). Horse racing and stickgames provided entertainment during leisure time. In 1904, the Indian Agency moved and the town gradually grew smaller with the last business (Watson's General Merchandise Store) closing in 1964. In 1935 the Idaho State Legislature established the Spalding Memorial State Park at the site of the old mission. A tree from each State in the Union was planted in the 14-acre arboretum, many of which survive to this day. In 1965, Nez Perce National Historical Park was created by an act of Congress, preserving Nez Perce history for future generations.

MISSIONARIES COME TO NEZ PERCE COUNTRY

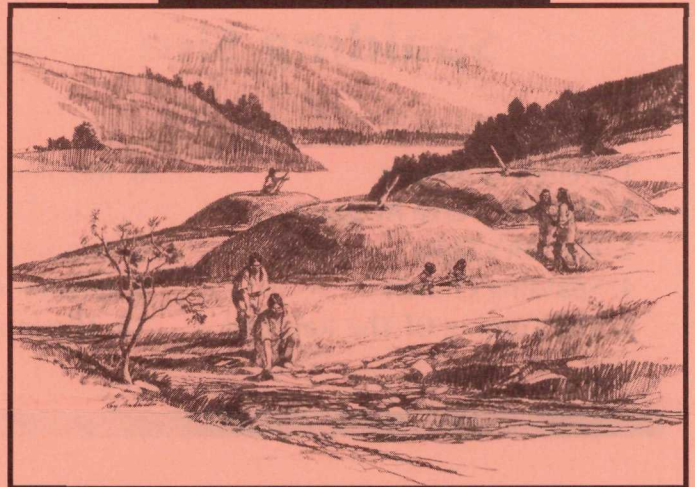
In 1831, four Nez Percés traveled to St. Louis in search of the 'book of Heaven and the teachers'. In response to that, Henry and Eliza Spalding along with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman were sent as missionaries by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions. Eliza and Narcissa were the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains. The Whitman's settled at Wailatpu near present day Walla Walla, Washington and the Spaldings at Lapwai near Idaho's Clearwater River.



The Spalding Cabin



Spear Fisherman

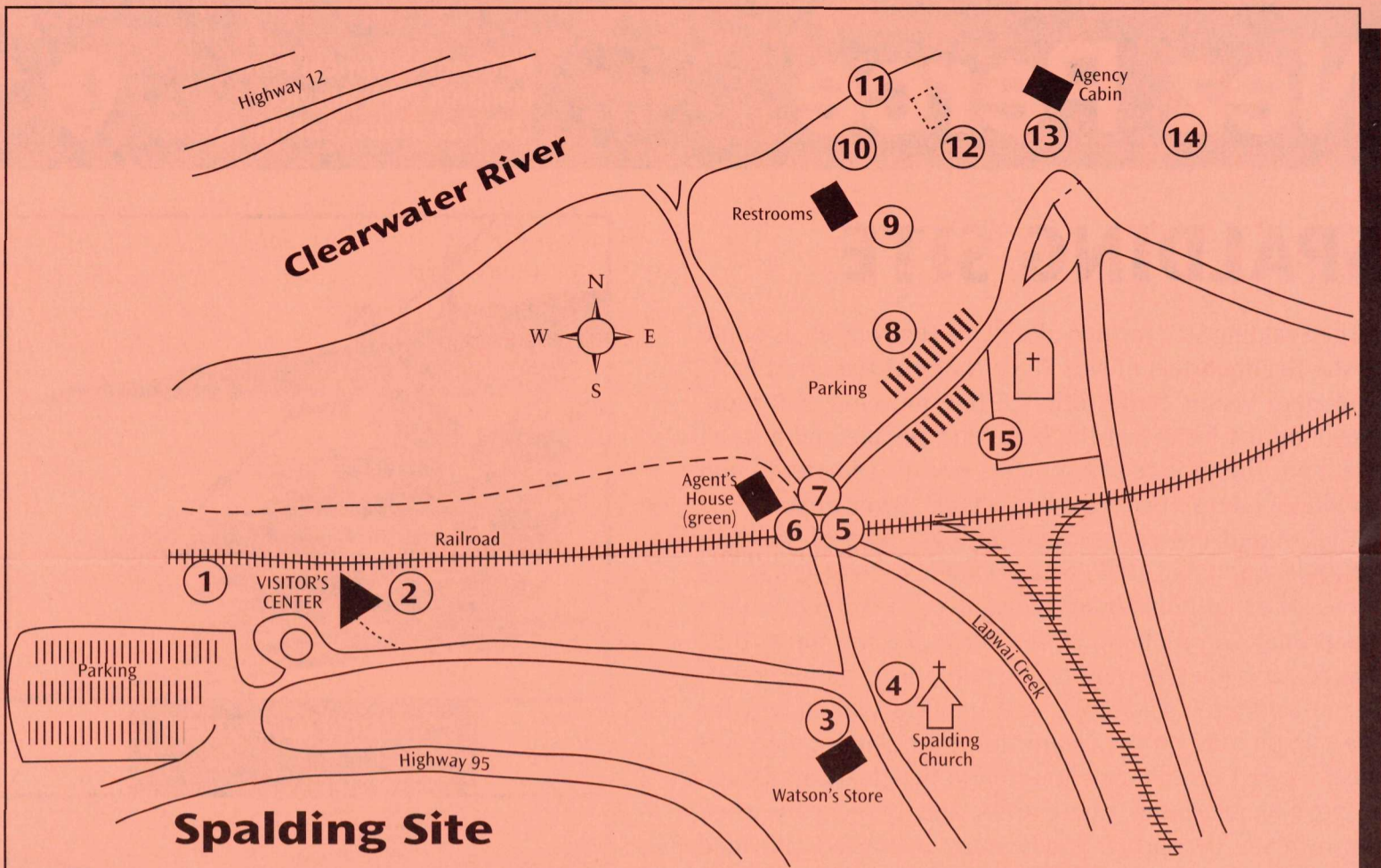


Pit Houses



Food Preparation

"We rode on and entered the valley. It proved to be larger than we expected. It is on a little stream emptying into Koos Koos from the south. We found it well-timbered with cotton wood, balm of gilead, birch, and a few pine. Soon found good soil. The Indians could scarcely contain themselves for joy when they heard us pronounce the word 'good'". So wrote Rev. Henry Harmon Spalding about his first view of Lapwai Valley in the fall of 1836. Spalding's built their first home at Thunder Hill, 2 miles up Lapwai Creek but heat and mosquitoes forced them to move to the banks of the Clearwater River where morning and evening breezes made for more pleasant living conditions.



Spalding Site

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| 1. Bredell Cemetery | 6. Nez Perce Indian Agency | 11. Clearwater River |
| 2. The Nez Perce At Spalding | 7. Place Of The Butterflies | 12. Spalding Mission |
| 3. Watson's Store | 8. The Nez Perce At Spalding | 13. Indian Agency Cabin |
| 4. Spalding Church | 9. Mission Gristmill | 14. Boomgrounds |
| 5. The Coming Of The Railroad | 10. Mission Sawmill | 15. Lapwai Mission Cemetery |

Spalding felt the Nez Percés needed a settled existence to learn the Christian religion. He therefore gave out seeds and hoes and taught them farming methods. Orchards were planted and land cultivated. They built a home, meeting house, school, mission church, blacksmith shop, sawmill, gristmill and a series of ditches, dikes and ponds that provided water to run both mills. Eliza taught school, often with over 200 students at a time.

Chief Timothy and Chief Joseph (father of the now famous Chief Joseph) were the first two to be baptized. As many as 2000 people attended Sunday services at the height of the Spalding mission efforts. Spalding was often considered stern and unyielding and yet ironically was the most 'successful' of any of the early missionaries, baptizing over 900 Indians before his death in 1874.

Eliza gave birth to four children while at the mission. The oldest, also named Eliza, was the first white child born in Idaho. In 1847, due to the murders of Whitmans and 12 others at Wailatpu, the Spaldings were ordered to close their mission. Eliza died three years later in Brownsville, Oregon. Henry returned to Nez Perce country twice as a teacher and missionary, dying at age 70 in Kamiah, Idaho. Years later, as a fitting memorial to her, the Nez Percés retrieved Eliza's body from Brownsville and placed it beside Henry's grave, just a few yards from their old mission home.

INDIAN AGENCY PERIOD

The first Nez Perce Reservation was created by the Treaty of 1855. Due to the large influx of gold miners trespassing on the Reservation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs established the Nez Perce Agency in 1861 at Spalding. The Indian Agent was supposed to keep the peace, mediate between Indians, settlers and the Army; administer treaties; promote the welfare of Indians; represent government interest; and supervise the allotments of supplies and lands on the Reservation. The Agency remained at Spalding until 1904 when it was moved to Fort Lapwai. Today, the Agent's House (painted the original bright green) can still be seen near Lapwai Creek.

CEMETERIES

Burial sites are considered sacred by the Nez Perce people, therefore the cemeteries at the Spalding Site are to be respected by all visitors. You may visit these Tribal cemeteries, but please do not stand on marked graves, take rubbings from headstones or touch memorial items left on the graves. Eating, drinking or any type of recreational activity within the cemeteries is considered inappropriate behavior.

