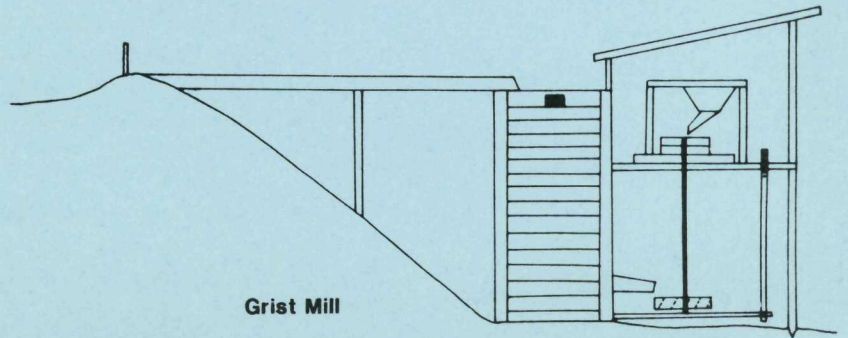


SPALDING SITE



MISSIONARIES COME TO IDAHO



"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."

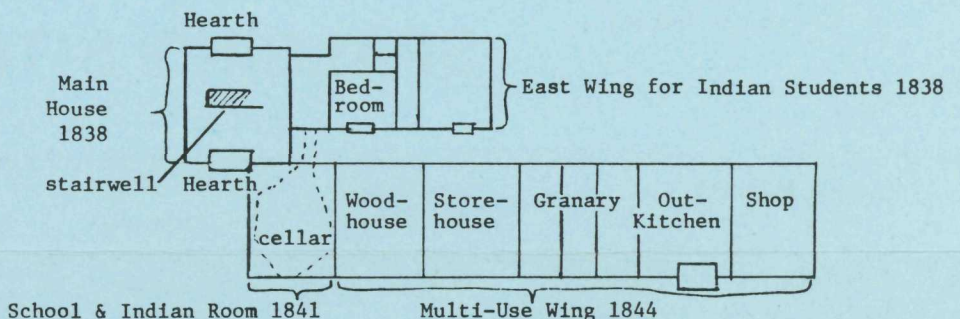
So wrote Rev. Henry Harmon Spalding about his first view of the Lapwai Valley in the fall of 1836. Spalding had been sent to the Nez Perces by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in response to requests by four Nez Perces. The Nez Perces had associated the white man's religion with his power and wealth of material possessions, and thus wished to learn more about them.

Spalding and his wife Eliza, along with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, had left Missouri in April 1836, arriving at Fort Vancouver on September 12, 1836. Eliza and Narcissa thus became the first white women to almost completely traverse the continent. Whitman later established a mission near present day Walla Walla, Washington, now Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

On November 28, 1836, Henry and Eliza arrived at their new home, a place called Thunder Hill, about two miles up Lapwai Creek from the Clearwater River. Mosquitoes and heat forced a move of the mission to the mouth of Lapwai Creek two years later.

Several villages of the Thlep-thlep-weyma band of the Nez Perces were located along the creek. This was a favored camping area, especially during the winter. During the rest of the year, the Nez Perces moved from place to place, hunting and fishing, and gathering roots, berries, and other wild foods.

MISSION SITE



Spalding felt the Nez Perces 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 meeting house and school, a mission church, a home, a blacksmith shop, and other buildings. Several Nez Perces were baptized.

Eliza taught school and kept house. In November 1837, she

gave birth to a baby girl, Eliza, the first white child born in Idaho.

A grist mill was completed and produced its first flour in August 1841. A sawmill was built and used from 1840 to 1847. A series of ditches, dikes, and ponds provided water to both mills. On a printing press acquired in 1839, the first printing in the Pacific Northwest was done.

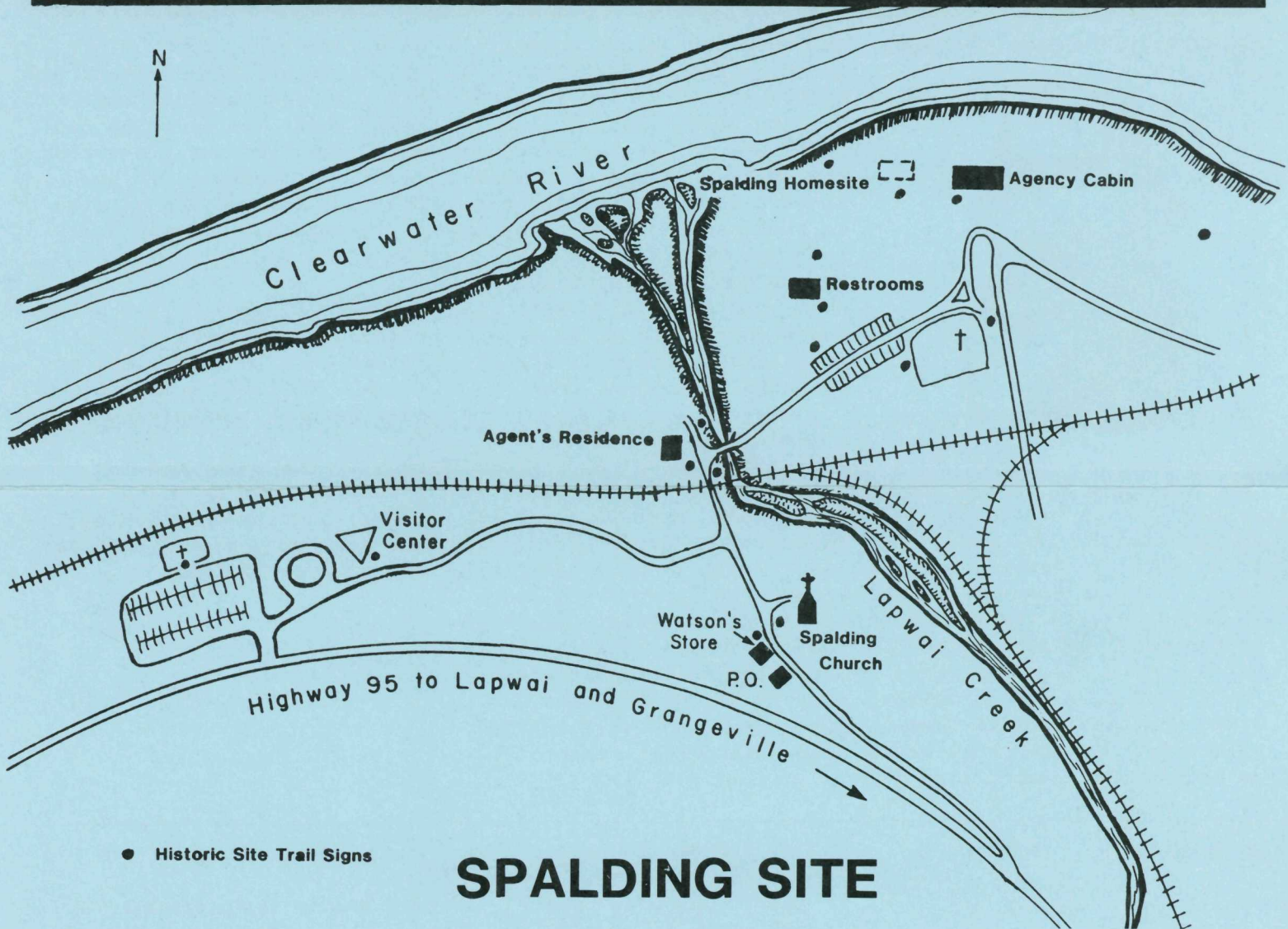
INDIAN AGENCY PERIOD

The Nez Perce Reservation was created by the Treaty of 1855. Gold was discovered in the Bitterroot Mountains in 1860 and miners rushed onto the reservation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs moved the Nez Perce Agency from Walla Walla to the mission site in 1860 and administered all religious and educational endeavors of the Nez Percés.

Rev. Spalding returned from Oregon with his new wife and they were employed as teachers from 1862 until late summer, 1865. At that time they were dismissed and went

back to Oregon. In 1871, Spalding was again appointed as teacher and missionary and remained until his death on August 3, 1874.

With the exception of one brief period, the Nez Perce Indian Agency remained at the Spalding site until 1904. That year it was moved to the site of the former Fort Lapwai. While none of the original Spalding Mission buildings remain, several agency structures still exist, along with a few other historic buildings.



SPALDING SITE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The present community and park area of Spalding, officially named in 1897, was originally called Lapwai. This fact is sometimes confusing because the present community of Lapwai is three miles south of Spalding.

Spalding was a thriving community until after the Nez Perce Agency moved in 1904. It boasted hotels, stores, saloons, a railroad station (once called "Joseph"),

blacksmith shops, and other businesses. The last of these, Watson's General Merchandise Store, closed in 1964.

In 1935 the Idaho legislature established the Spalding Memorial State Park at the site of the old mission. The state park was dedicated on May 10, 1936, and consisted of 14 acres planted with tree and plant species representative of each state. One newspaper referred to it as a "shrine" as it represented many "firsts" in Idaho history. The

Spaldings were the first white family to take up residence in Idaho and they introduced the first saw and grist mills, agriculture, written language, and printing to Idaho.

Nez Perce National Historical Park was created on May 15, 1965, by an act of Congress. The importance of the Spalding Site, near the "Koos Koos," is now preserved for all peoples to enjoy and learn about this important chapter of America's history.

