



Spalding Site

Welcome to the Spalding Site. For thousands of years, Nimiipuu or Nez Perce have called this place home. For the last 150 years, Indian Agency employees and settlers have enjoyed the benefits of this place. We invite you to walk the trails and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Clearwater River. There are several trails to choose from that tell the many stories of what we know today as the Spalding site.

The Old Townsite Trail (1 mile)

The trail meanders along the flat grassy area below the visitor center. There are excellent views of the hillside across the Clearwater River. For what the trail lacks in shade, it makes up for frequent opportunities to see wildlife.

The Old Townsite

The trail takes you through an area that has seen two distinct periods of occupation, the Nez Perce Indian agency and homesteading. The Indian

agency, which was here from 1860 to 1904, had several buildings. At the start of the trail is a green house. This is where the Superintendent of the agency had his home and is one of two buildings from that period still standing.

When the agency left for old Fort Lapwai, several homesteads were established. If you look carefully, you can find remnants of them - fruit trees, lilac bushes and even an old root cellar.

Lapwai Creek Trail (.2 mile)

The trail leads you along the creek onto a gravel bar which overlooks the confluence of Lapwai Creek and the Clearwater River.

From the trail you can see song birds and waterfowl, rabbits, insects, salmon and other fish. You may even be able to catch a glimpse of our resident beavers who, in years past, have built their dams and lodges near the mouth of the creek.

Lapwai Creek

The rivers and streams in Nez Perce country all lead to the Columbia River. In historic times, the Columbia River Basin had some of the largest

salmon populations in the world. The Nez Perce caught salmon in the Clearwater River and Lapwai Creek in the spring and fall to spawn.

The Treaty of 1855 reserved the rights of Nez Perce to fish in their "usual and accustomed places" on and off the reservation. In more recent times, dams on the Columbia River and its tributaries have caused steep declines in salmon populations. The Nez Perce Tribe, has taken a leading role in preserving Salmon 'runs' in the Columbia River basin. In the spring and fall you may be able to watch the salmon on Lapwai Creek migrating up stream to spawn.

Picnic Area Trail (.4 mile)

The trail winds through a Nez Perce village site and the location of Rev. Henry Spalding's mission. Follow the paved trail to the restrooms. The interpretive signs scattered throughout the area mark the outline of the trail.

For generations the Nez Perce used this area and moved with the seasons. Each summer they moved to the prairies and mountains to hunt, gather roots, berries and other plants. They returned each fall in time for the salmon 'run' on the Clearwater River. In the winter months, they stayed in the river bottoms where the weather was milder.

In 1936 the Idaho State Legislature established the Spalding Memorial State Park, at the site of the old mission. The grove of trees you see today was planted when the park was established. In 1965,

Nez Perce National Historical Park was created by an act of Congress.

The Missionaries

In 1831, four Nez Perce traveled to St. Louis in search of the 'Book of Heaven'. In response to that, Henry and Eliza Spalding along with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman were sent west as missionaries by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions. In 1836, the Whitman's settled at Wailatpu near present day Walla Walla, Washington and the Spaldings here at Lapwai.

The Spaldings remained here until 1847. Eliza died in 1850 but Henry would return to the area as a teacher. Despite his reputation as stern and unyielding, he developed a large following, baptizing over 900 Nez Perce before his death in 1874.

Watson's Trail (.1 mile)

This trail is short, but leads you off the main road in the shade towards Watson's store, a historic building. During certain times of the year, native flowers like lomatiums and stonecrops can be seen growing out of cracks in the Basalt columns along the trail. The trail is actually an old raceway—a manmade ditch from the 1840s that carried water to the mills.

Watson's Store

The general store owned and operated by Lewis and Margaret Watson opened for business in 1910 and remained in operation until 1965.

Mr. Watson was a good businessman, devoted father and loved telling stories. He was devoted to his wife, Margaret and was involved with the community.

Even as their business gradually declined, the Watson's remained devoted to their customers. In the early 1960s, faced with their poor health and the death of their daughter, they sold the store and went to Salt Lake City. Margaret Watson died in 1965 and Lewis passed away in 1966.

Boomgrounds Trail (.2 mile)

The Boomgrounds Trail offers sweeping views of the Clearwater River. Because of the bend in the river, trees, branches, and logs washed downstream by spring floods were deposited on the beach. The name "boomground" is a logging term that refers to a place where wood is collected.

Portions of this area were cultivated when Spalding had his mission on the site and continued to be plowed well into the 20th century. Scattered

throughout the area were also some small homesteads, a small gas station and a museum run by the Evans family.

Cemeteries

Burial sites are sacred to 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.
- **Do not** 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.