

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SHOSHONI AND NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS IN IDAHO

Number 484

November 1970

Known generally in the nineteenth century as Snake Indians (a term that came from the Plains neighbors of the Shoshoni in the eighteenth century), the Shoshoni and Northern Paiute Indians had the same culture except for language. (Their languages are related, yet distinct). Many of the Shoshoni, followed by some of the Northern Paiute, had acquired horses in the eighteenth century, and thus had been able to travel about more easily and to organize into bands in some cases. In the early years of the fur trade, Alexander Ross (who had come to the Pacific Northwest in 1810 and who led the Hudson's Bay Company Snake expedition of 1824) managed to identify the Shoshoni who traveled in large bands, the Shoshoni who had not organized into bands, the Mountain Snakes (sometimes known as the Sheepeaters: Northern Shoshoni who lived in the Salmon River Mountains, the upper Beaver Head drainage in Montana, and the Yellowstone Park country, and who could be recognized as different from the other Northern Shoshoni), and the Bannock (Northern Paiute who had horses and traveled with the Fort Hall Shoshoni), although he confused the latter two. Ross knew that his analysis was not quite perfect, but he did the best he could, managing inadvertently to reduce the four divisions he was dealing with into three. When the time came for the United States to deal with these Indians, at least six treaties were negotiated (1863-1866), and not all of them were covered at that. Altogether, a number of Northern Shoshoni and Northern Paiute groupings can be identified in Idaho. Some Western Shoshoni also ranged north into the edge of southern Idaho, although the Western Shoshoni roamed almost entirely in Utah and Nevada. The southern Wyoming Indians in the nineteenth century, came into part of Idaho as well. The Eastern Shoshoni, so that traditionally they had been distinguished from the rest of the Northern Shoshoni. Northern Shoshoni, Southern Shoshoni, and Western Shoshoni are different dialects of the same language, so that except for the Eastern Shoshoni, language is the basis for these major groupings of Shoshoni peoples.

### NORTHERN SHOSHONI

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### NORTHERN SHOSHONI

#### 1. Mountain Shoshoni

Mountain Snakes or Sheepeaters: Culturally more conservative and traditional, the Sheepeaters (Tukeydeka, literally, mountain-sheep eaters) retained their traditional ways and used older language forms. Archaeological sites on Salmon River trace their culture there for 8,000 years or so. Much nonsense (suggesting that they are a mixture of renegades from other bands or tribes crowded back into the hills) has been circulated about the Sheepeaters, who generally were recognized by the early settlers who knew them as mild mannered and inoffensive. In 1879 some of them were rounded up during the Sheepeater campaign, a military affair in which the Indians had only twelve combatants (out of a total population of fifty-two) but, when approached by the army, won a couple of battles before they finally decided to move to reservations. At least one independent Sheepeater group, Eagle Eye's Weiser Indians, avoided the war and lived up above the forks of the Payette in Dry Buck Valley until about the end of the century. Aside from the Sheepeaters, white travelers used to refer to other Northern Shoshoni bands as the Salmon Eaters, Pine Nut Eaters, or Rock Chuck Eaters, for example. These terms, however, serve no useful purpose as band names: they simply reflect what the Indians happened to be eating when the analyst met them, and the Salmon Eaters of one day might have been the Pine Nut Eaters another. Some Northern Shoshoni jokingly referred to themselves as the People Eaters. A few (but not all) of the eater designations that the Indians sometimes used will be indicated in this listing. Generally no really exceptional skill (as was the case with the Sheepeaters) was necessary to be a Pine Nut Eater, for example, and all of the Shoshoni (including the Sheepeaters) in an annual migratory cycle subsisted upon a variety of foods that were available seasonally.

Lemhi Shoshoni (or Salmon Eaters, in their own terminology): Originally Mountain Snakes or Sheepeaters, the Lemhi Shoshoni obtained horses in the eighteenth century and organized into a migratory band before Lewis and Clark met them in 1805. Sacajawea, a Lemhi Shoshoni captured by Plains Indians in 1800, accompanied Lewis and Clark, and helped persuade the Lemhi

Shoshoni to provide the expedition with horses necessary to traverse the Lolo Trail. Her brother, Cameahwait, led the Lemhi band when Lewis and Clark appeared: prominent later leaders included Snag (until the time of the gold rush) and Tendoy, who kept his people on the Lemhi reservation until 1907. After Tendoy's time, the Lemhi band, which included many Bannock as well as Shoshoni, moved to Fort Hall.

## 2. Western Groups

Boise Shoshoni: Among the early mounted Shoshoni bands, the Boise Shoshoni traveled over a considerable range by the beginning of the nineteenth century. When Donald MacKenzie developed the Snake country fur trade after 1818, the most prominent of the Boise Shoshoni, Peiem (a Shoshoni rendition of "Big Jim," their leader's English name), became the most influential leader of the large composite Shoshoni band that white trappers regularly encountered in the Snake country. Peiem served as the most important Shoshoni spokesman at MacKenzie's great peace conference on Little Lost River in 1820, and figured conspicuously in Shoshoni affairs when Alexander Ross and Peter Skeene Ogden led the Snake expedition later in the decade. Peiem's son, and successor, Captain Jim, was a leader of the Boise Shoshoni at the time of their removal, March 12-April 13, to the Fort Hall Reservation, which had been established for the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni, June 14, 1867.

Bruneau Shoshoni: Not organized into bands, the Bruneau Shoshoni occupied southwestern Idaho, mainly south of Snake River, when the gold rush to Boise Basin brought settlers in after 1862. After their treaty of April 12, 1866, went unratified, the Fort Hall Reservation was set aside partly for them. Later in 1877, the Duck Valley Reservation was established in their lands.

Weiser (Shewoki): This band, with a half-dozen winter camps from the lower Weiser country to New Plymouth, some of whom resisted placement on the Malheur Reservation, finally settled at Fort Hall and on the Duck Valley Reservation instead.

## 3. Northwestern Bands

Speaking a subdialect of Northern Shoshoni, these groups (one of which is from Utah) suffered severely during the fur trade. Trappers rendezvous, held several times at Bear Lake or in Cache Valley, proved ruinous. Then a major band (the Cache Valley Shoshoni) was practically wiped out in a military engagement in 1863. In the Box Elder treaty that followed, they are referred to as the Northwestern Shoshoni.

Bannock Creek Shoshoni: From a base on Bannock Creek and Arbon Valley, Pocatello's band, along with two others, claimed lands extending from Raft River to the Portneuf range, so that their

country took in part of the Fort Hall Reservation when it was established in 1867. In 1873, the three major Bannock Creek bands (Pocatello's, with 101 people; San Pitch, with 124; and Sagwitch, with 158) moved to the reservation at Fort Hall, and a small group went to Wind River.

Cache Valley Shoshoni: This band of Eastern Shoshoni ranged into Idaho and Utah with their major base not far from the later Wyoming border. They were practically wiped out at the Battle of Bear River (Idaho's largest Indian battle), January 29, 1863, by Colonel P. E. Connor's California Volunteers. Followed two month's later by a similarly destructive campaign by Jefferson Standifer's Placerville Volunteers against the Shoshoni at Salmon Falls, this fight led to a series of Shoshoni and Bannock treaties (Fort Bridger, July 2; Box Elder, July 30; Ruby Valley, October 1; Soda Springs, October 14) affecting Idaho, as well as the Gosiute band of Western Shoshoni (October 12) in Tooele Valley in Utah.

Weber Utes: A Shoshoni band farther south in Utah, these Indians speak the same dialect as the other Northwestern bands, but were overlooked in the treaty-making process and never got a reservation.

Bear Lake Shoshoni: This group ranged from McCammon to Bear Lake, or Logan River in Utah, and on over to the continental divide. They were known by the name Pengwideka ("Fisheaters") under a chieftain Werasuape ("Bear Spirit"), a close friend of Washakie.

#### **4. Fort Hall (Pohogwe Shoshoni)**

Fort Hall Shoshoni: This group of mounted Shoshoni began to travel regularly together with mounted Northern Paiute (known as Bannock) who in the eighteenth century and onward shifted from an original homeland farther west. This large combined band of Shoshoni and Bannock is described more fully in the Northern Paiute and Bannock section below. In their treaty signed at Soda Springs, October 14, 1863, they identified their range as extending from the Wind River Mountains to Salmon Falls in the central part of the valley of the Snake.

### **EASTERN SHOSHONI**

Washakie's band: Operating mainly in the Wind River country, these Eastern Shoshoni normally would not be regarded as Idaho Indians. In their treaty signed at Fort Bridger, July 2, 1863, Washakie's Eastern Shoshoni claimed the Upper Snake River Plains over to the mountains on the north, and had no idea of how far they wanted to claim to the west. The Fort Hall Shoshoni and Bannock, who were expected to supply that information, could not be consulted until later, and both traveled through mostly the

same land. The Eastern Shoshoni winter camps were in the valley of Green River in what now is Wyoming.

#### NORTHERN PAIUTE

Bannock: Northern Paiute who shifted from the Paiute region farther west to the Fort Hall area after acquiring horses in the eighteenth century are known as Bannock. Some of them (a hundred or so in reservation times) traveled with the Lemhi Shoshoni, but most of them traveled with the Fort Hall Shoshoni. (Sometimes the term Bannock is used to refer to the entire composite Fort Hall band of Northern Shoshoni and Northern Paiute Indians, rather than simply to those Northern Paiute who obtained horses and joined the Shoshoni in the Fort Hall band. Most members of the Fort Hall band were bilingual by the nineteenth century, and leadership--as well as membership--in the band was partly Northern Shoshoni and partly Northern Paiute.) An outstanding Bannock leader during the fur trade until the fall of 1832 was The Horse. His band took credit for wiping out John Reid's fur trade post on the lower Boise early in January, 1814, and for a number of similar incidents down through 1824. But for the next eight years, The Horse kept peace with the whites and prevented any additional incidents of that nature. In the later fur trade and Salmon River mission era, Le Grand Coquin was prominent in Bannock leadership, and he appeared as an important signer of the Treaty of Soda Springs, October 14, 1863. When the time came to arrange for a suitable reservation, Tagi (who also had signed the Soda Springs treaty) saw to it that his Bannock could stay at Fort Hall. After he assented, in a conference with Governor D. W. Ballard, August 26, 1867, to the Fort Hall proposal (the reservation had recently been established for the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni, but he agreed to join them), an effort was made in the Fort Bridger treaty negotiation in the summer of 1868 to have Tagi's Bannock and the Fort Hall Shoshoni settle with the Eastern Shoshoni at Wind River. Tagi resisted this change, and obtained provision for lands around Fort Hall and on Camas Prairie. To meet part of this condition, the already existing Boise-Bruneau Fort Hall reservation was designated, July 30, 1868, as the Fort Bridger treaty reservation for the Bannock as well.

Payette and Weiser Paiute: Although the Boise and Bruneau Indians were Northern Shoshoni, and the upper Payette was also Sheepeater (Northern Shoshoni), the lower Payette around Horseshoe Bend and Emmett, as well as the lower Weiser, in part had a Northern Paiute population related to the Bannock of the Fort Hall region. When these Indians moved to the Fort Hall reservation, they merged into the Bannock people there.

***Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428***