

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

POCATELLO'S [SHOSHONI] BAND

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In response to an enquiry concerning aboriginal occupation of City of Rocks and Upper Raft River, Sven Liljeblad reported that Pocatello's band ranged from Upper Humboldt and Upper Goose Creek valleys past City of Rocks and Raft River to Promontory Caves (referred to by Julian Steward), and Bannock Creek. His territory takes in a considerable area of Idaho, Utah, and Nevada. Pocatello's band also spent time with some Northwestern bands as well as Cache Valley Shoshoni and Washakie's Eastern Shoshoni bands. At times Pocatello had winter camps on Green River with Washakie.

(Sven has a Shoshoni informant who corroborates Nick Wilson's accounts of Pocatello's joint buffalo hunts with Washakie on Green River.)

Pocatello's band also fished at Salmon Falls. His band had horses early, as did Boise Shoshoni and some other eighteenth-century bands, and were early occupants of Cache Valley. Although they ranged over extensive Northern and Eastern Shoshoni lands, Pocatello's "tough boys did not tolerate other [Indian] people or let them into Raft river" which was his central exclusive territory.

Sven's primary informant for Pocatello's band operations was Jeanette Pocatello--a daughter of Pocatello who was only about four years old when Pocatello died. She reported that Pocatello's people were known to other Shoshoni as wild wheat eaters when they occupied lands around Bannock Creek and Promontory Caves; that they were pinyon pine nut eaters around City of Rocks, where several detached groves far north of other pinyon stands were available; and that Fort Hall Shoshoni and Bannock bands referred to Pocatello's crew as pinyon pine nut eaters as distinguished from their economy as limber pine nut eaters. She gave Pocatello credit for concern with heavy

emigrant traffic. He finally sent his people to take away some of their wagons at Massacre Rocks. [No doubt similar actions simultaneously at City of Rocks represent another phase of Pocatello's resistance to emigrant intrusion, because that was also part of his domain.] She also noted that although some of Pocatello's band was camped with [Bear Hunter's] Cache Valley Shoshoni, January 29, 1863 when P. E. Connor attacked them, that Pocatello was not there during that clash. After that disaster Pocatello did not know what to do. But finally he decided to settle at Fort Hall reservation. Other Shoshoni bands that wound up at Fort Hall were brought there by military force, but Pocatello came by his own choice. After 1869, Fort Hall was overcrowded with Boise Shoshoni, a situation that made trouble for Pocatello when he elected to come there with 400 people. So he ended up on Bannock Creek, away from other bands. Jeanette Pocatello (Mrs. Doty Lewis) believes Pocatello's natural father was Shoshoni, but Pocatello had a later Shoshoni father (as was common in their culture) after his original father died. Pocatello's widow later married a Montana Indian and had other children unrelated to Pocatello, although they used his name. Gossip about Pocatello's mother's earlier kidnaping by Sioux (but, by other detailed evidence, actually Assiniboine) Indians led to erroneous suggestions that Pocatello was half Sioux. Sven regards F. W. Lander's references to Pocatello (although spelled differently) as our earliest known use of his English name.

(Lander's upper Humboldt meeting with Pocatello indicates how far his band ranged into Nevada.) Pocatello, according to Jeanette, never used that name, but called himself Tondzaosha (Buffalo Robe); John Rees' explanation of a totally different name for Pocatello is simply a collection of unrelated Shoshoni syllables and is not a Shoshoni word at all. It totally lacks factual foundation.

(Summary of information provided by Sven Liljeblad, Reno, 29 June 1984.)

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