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SPALDING'S MISSION

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Henry Harmon Spalding joined his bride, Eliza Hart Spalding in establishing a Nez Perce school and mission on Lapwai Creek in 1836. Then in 1838, they moved their project from its original location in a field north of Fort Lapwai (1862) to a Clearwater River site just west of Lapwai Creek. They remained there slightly more than a decade before they had to suspend operations for fourteen years because of Cayuse opposition to Marcus and Narcissa Whitman's missionary operations near Walla Walla. Eliza Spalding's school had more success than other missionary operations in that area enjoyed, but a Nez Perce church also was started. After 1864, it grew considerably, expanding to incorporate converts from other tribes. But large numbers of Nez Perce people--particularly those whose lands were appropriated by ranchers and miners--retained their traditional religion.

Spalding managed to interest a number of his Lapwai Nez Perce associates to go into irrigated farming in 1838. They started Idaho's potato industry then, and continued to grow crops after his missionary labors there were suspended. When gold discoveries in 1860 at Pierce attracted thousands of miners to Nez Perce lands, these tribal farmers suddenly had a commercial market for their crops. Spalding also got an early printing press and commenced publishing volumes of Nez Perce language materials--a business that preceded any other Pacific Northwest printing ventures. All of these enterprises, along with a general history of Nez Perce peoples and their experience, are interpreted at Nez Perce National Historic Park headquarters adjacent to Spalding's mission site.

(This information has not been edited.)

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