

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JAN 14 1980

DATE ENTERED

MAR 12 1980

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

First Lapwai Bank

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 302 West First Street

CITY, TOWN

Lapwai

VICINITY OF

First

STATE

Idaho

CODE

16

COUNTY

Nez Perce

CODE

069

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Howard L. Alligier

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1

CITY, TOWN

Lapwai

VICINITY OF

STATE

Idaho

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Nez Perce County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lewiston

STATE

Idaho

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

1972

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Idaho State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Boise

STATE

Idaho

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
☐ EXCELLENT	☐ DETERIORATED	☒ UNALTERED	☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ GOOD	☐ RUINS	☐ ALTERED	☐ MOVED DATE _____
☒ FAIR	☐ UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Lapwai Bank building, built in 1909, is a rectangular frame and concrete structure with shingled hip-and-ridge roof and overhanging, filled eaves. It stands one block off the main commercial street of this Nez Perce Indian reservation town and faces east. Despite its partial re-siding and conversion to a residence, the building remains in adequate overall condition. It has not been used as a bank since 1927.

Although the building's most unusual architectural feature, a full-sized Indian tepee on the roof, has been lost, most of its distinguishing elements are still visible on the facade. The most notable of these elements remaining is the inset entry porch to the right of center, which exhibits an "Islamic" or horseshoe arch. This, however, is not a true arch, since instead of springing from any vertical support, it is "corbelled" onto the inner faces of the entry frame and is formed from linear and curved wooden shapes laminated together. The "arch" is broken by a tall wooden keystone and the spandrels show an in-fill of small pebbles pressed into concrete. The two-panel front door has a multi-light transom which was originally above a frosted-glass window. To the left of the door, within the porch, are rectangular windows with multiple lights above single lower panes and to the right is a wider single-pane window with transom; all of the windows of the porch have molded sills.

Framing the facade are slightly outset corner pilasters. These are outlined in flat molding strips and in-filled with concrete-pebble aggregate. The pilasters have allusive capitals formed by two overlapping strips of flat molding and rounded molding cap. There is a matching pilaster to the left of the entry and the molded "capital" actually appears as a continuous frieze just below the eaves on all sides of the building, interrupted only by the entry arch.

On the left side of the facade are two large rectangular windows each with twenty-four square lights above a single pane. Plywood siding currently covers the space below the windows but an early photograph indicates that there were four concrete panels framed in molding on this portion of the wall. The re-siding covers the lower part of the center and right pilaster as well. The left pilaster is unaltered.

The original composition of the south side of the building was quite similar to that of the facade, with corner pilasters, a transomed entrance to the rear and two windows above four concrete panels. On this side, though, horizontal lap siding filled the spaces between these elements. All but the windows, including the lower part of both pilasters, has been covered over with vertical wood siding.

The north and west sides of the building substantially retain what appears to be original ship-lap siding. Despite their visibility from the street, there are no indications of pilasters on these sides and, except for the continuing frieze board, no detail to speak of. On the north side are three smaller windows with multiple lights above single panes and at the rear are

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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two small windows and a simple entry of unknown vintage. A river-rock-in-concrete chimney, with a flat concrete cap, rises from the northwest corner of the building. This was the general location of the bank's vault.

Approximately eight inches of the stone-in-concrete foundation can be seen all around the building. When the bank was operating, a wooden walkway two steps off the street covered the foundation and brought patrons to the two-step entry. There are now three steps to the porch landing. Several other distinctive features of the bank have been lost since its closing. In its earlier form, the roofline supported square blocks with pyramidal caps of undetermined material at the four corners, as if to suggest the endings of structural piers. There was also a hipped overhang extending off the main roof and running the length of the facade which shielded the entry. Finally, this Indian-incorporated bank was graced with its tepee, rendered in shingles, which sat on the front-facing slope of the roof. The tepee is reported to have burned down as a result of sparks from an adjacent fire in around 1930 and perhaps the other roof ornaments perished at that time.

Some of the original cedar woodwork survives on the interior. The window openings, framed in molding, include references to pilasters at the sides and a remarkably faithful egg-and-dart motif at the cornice-line. One of the original brass light fixtures, with four fluted Flint glass shades, is extant.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION
1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE
1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE
1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER
1800-1899	☒ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION
1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		☐ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1909

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Lapwai Bank building is architecturally and historically significant as one of the most curious commercial buildings in Idaho, and one of the oldest business structures standing in Lapwai. It is a graphic illustration of the heightened economic and cultural aspirations of the Nez Perce tribe after the turn of the century.

The unique building was begun in March, 1909, shortly after incorporation papers for the bank were filed in Lewiston by three Nez Perce and two white businessmen, all from Lapwai. The majority of the \$10,000 capital was provided by the Nez Perce stockholders, making the enterprise, according to the Lewiston Morning Tribune, "the first institution of the kind ever organized in the U.S."¹ The driving force of the Nez Perce owners was Corbett Lawyer, described as "a prominent and very intelligent Indian."² Lawyer worked with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and had been raised and initially educated in Lapwai. He was one of the first Nez Perce to be sent East to school--he attended Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and Dickinson Teacher's College before returning to the west.

By 1909, Lapwai had become a thriving center of Indian trade, even before its official incorporation in 1911. The town had generated from reservation land allotted to the Nez Perce in 1877, but there had been a settlement in this area 11 miles east of Lewiston since the U. S. Army Fort Lapwai had been established there in 1862. There was substantial commercial activity before 1900, the first recorded store having opened in 1895. However, most of the monetary worth of the area was contained in the land, and the Nez Perce income from timber sales and rental of reservation parcels was fast accumulating. The Indian money had been kept at the Moscow National Bank previous to its failure in 1897.³ Indian wariness of white banks and bankers after this event caused mounting commercial concern that Indian money was being "buried." It was felt that "with a tribesman owning a bank it is believed that this distrust will disappear."⁴ The first Lapwai Bank was opened in the summer of 1909 and began operating with a clerk and a cashier, both white. Later that year, N. D. Saunders of Kansas City, Missouri was elected president. The Bank was "voluntarily liquidated" in 1927. It has been said that its last cashier disappeared with the assets.

However shortlived, the existence of the Indian-owned banking business in this small reservation town signified a kind of financial independence for the Nez Perce. Corbett Lawyer's active role in the community and his familial heritage

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as the grandson of the famous Chief Lawyer, signer of the Treaty of 1855, and as the son of an ordained Presbyterian minister was perhaps the key in creating the climate of trust between the Indian and white stockholders necessary for the realization of the bank project.

The design of the bank building cannot be definitely attributed, but the mixture of Indian and European stylistic elements on the part of the builder probably represented additional efforts to inspire a sense of security among potential Indian investors. The inset entry and the low, solid profile of the building evoke overall stability as well as making reference to an established type of commercial architecture. The "eyecatching feature", the tepee on the roof, was, of course, the most distinctive visual element of the bank, and clearly advertised the focus of its services.

The dedication of the building, which was constructed with Indian labor, was a celebration, and included "the appearance of some of the Indian women in colorful costumes, with Mrs. Lawyer in the dress of her tribe, the Sioux."⁵ The citizens of Lapwai recognized the establishment of the First Lapwai Bank as a significant achievement in the development of the town and the continued existence of the bank building, which may be converted to a cultural center for the Nez Perce, is a reminder of the past prosperity of the tribe.

¹ Lewiston Morning Tribune, Lewiston, Idaho, 27 March, 1909, p. 1, c. 5.

² Ibid., p. 1, c. 5.

³ Glen Barrett, Idaho Banking 1863-1976, p. 165.

⁴ Lewiston Morning Tribune, 27 March, p. 1, c. 5.

⁵ Lewiston Morning Tribune, 30 January 1971, p. 6, c. 7.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Barrett, Glenn, Idaho Banking 1863-1976. Boise: BSU Press, 1976.

History of Idaho : Personal & Family History, V. 3. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc.

Lewiston Morning Tribune. Lewiston, Idaho : 27 March 1909; 28 March 1909; 29 May 1909; 30 January 1971.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

QUADRANGLE NAME Lapwai

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,1 5,1,4 9,5,0 5,1,3,8 6,5,0

B

ZONE EASTING

NORTHING

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This nomination includes the First Lapwai Bank building at 302 West First Street in Lapwai and the property on which it stands; lot 1, block 10, Toyaulkts addition.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Lisa B. Reitzes, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Idaho State Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

610 North Julia Davis Drive

CITY OR TOWN

Boise

DATE

TELEPHONE

384-2120

STATE

Idaho

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

2 Jan 80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

3/12/80

ATTEST:

W. Ray Luce
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

3/11/80

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION



First Lapwai Bank MAR 1 2 1980
302 West First Street
Lapwai, Nez Perce County, Idaho

Photographer: Patricia Wright
August, 1979

Negative on file at:
Idaho State Historical Society
Boise, Idaho

View from Southeast
1 of 3

JAN 14 1980



First Lapwai Bank
302 West First Street
Lapwai, Nez Perce County, Idaho

Photographer: Lisa B. Reitzes
August, 1979

MAR 12 1980

Negative on file at:
Idaho State Historical Society
Boise, Idaho

View from East JAN 14 1980
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First Lapwai Bank
302 West First Street
Lapwai, Nez Perce County, Idaho

Photographer: Unknown
Pre-1930

Negative on file at:
Idaho State Historical Society
Boise, Idaho

MAR 12 1980

View from Northeast
3 of 3

JAN 14 1980