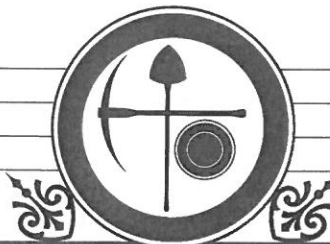


This month's theme:
Fort Lemhi



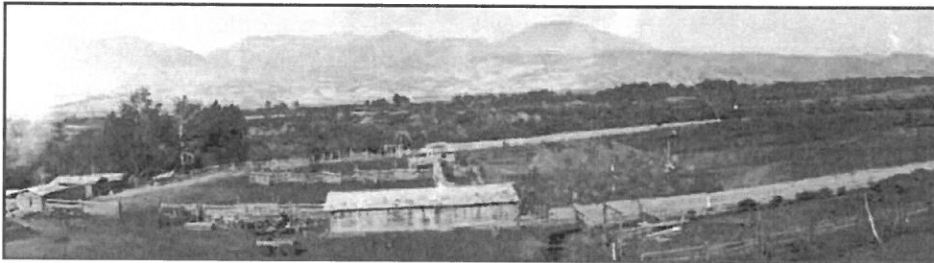
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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

PROSPECTOR

November, 2007



Fort Lemhi

In the 1850's, before many of the roads and towns that now are spread throughout Idaho were built, pioneers had to make their way through the wilderness on their own. When they got to where they were going, they then had to build some kind of shelter to stay warm in the winter and plant crops so they had enough to eat. This is the story of one such journey. This is the story of Fort Lemhi.

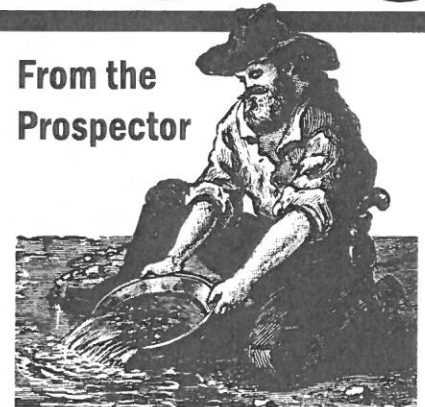
In May of 1855 a group of twenty-seven Mormon missionaries from Salt Lake City, Utah headed north toward the Salmon River country. By the middle of June they arrived in the area that

we now know as the Lemhi Valley. Chief Sho-Woo-Koo of the Bannock Tribe reportedly welcomed the explorers and offered a plot of land for them to set up a settlement. The Mormons, weary from their long and difficult trek, gladly accepted the generous offer and quickly began working on a fort and other smaller buildings. They were racing against time. The cold fall and winter months were on their way and the settlers had to build shelter and stockpile food before bad weather set in.

Building a fort was difficult work. Imagine trying to haul huge logs through steep canyons or digging ditches for irrigation and

Continued on next page

From the Prospector



Howdy Prospectors

Cold weather is on the way. Luckily my mule just learned to knit. He's busy making me a sweater for the long winter ahead. Not everyone in Idaho is fortunate enough to have such a crafty critter. Can you imagine what winter must have been like for the Native Americans or early settlers in our state? Living in Idaho 150 years ago wasn't easy. There were no grocery stores or shopping malls and certainly no mule-produced fuzzy sweaters. This month's newsletter tells the story of what life was like for some of the past inhabitants of eastern Idaho. Enjoy the story of Fort Lemhi.

Lucky Noah

Fort Lemhi Continued

clearing fields for crops all without any of the big machines or tools that we use today. The settlers constructed sixteen cabins for shelter, each measuring about 16 by 16 feet in size. They also built a kind of security fence, called a palisade, made from upright logs that stood about 9 feet tall and surrounded the fort. A sawmill, a blacksmith shop, and a corral for ponies and cattle were added later.

The crops they planted provided them with some food for the winter but swarms of grasshoppers destroyed many of the crops they planted. One of the settlers wrote in his journal that “the grasshoppers continue to come in countless numbers and eating our little crops of potatoes, corn, peas, and beans as if the face of the earth is covered with grasshoppers.” That sounds like a lot of grasshoppers!

The Mormons had to come up with a name for the new fort and decided to call it Fort Limhi after King Limhi, an important figure in the Mormon religion. At some point since then the spelling of the name changed from Limhi to Lemhi. This area became the Lemhi Valley and is now the location of places like Salmon and Tendoy. Before the Mormons arrived in the 1850’s many different Native American tribes lived in and

visited this area. They went by many different names; among them the Shoshone, Nez Perce, Paiute, and Bannock.

Over time, the smaller bands of Indians in the area combined to form one large tribe. This tribe became known as the Lemhi Shoshone and



A cabin from Fort Lemhi and a typical summer Native American shelter from Eastern Idaho

many of the tribe members still live in the Lemhi Valley. You might recognize the name of Sacajawea, perhaps the most famous member of this Shoshone Tribe.

The Mormons made it through

the first winter and kept planting and building in 1856. The fort seemed like a big success. Many of the Mormons learned to speak the Shoshone language and the size of the settlement nearly doubled by 1857. But not everyone was happy about the Mormon visitors. The

cutting of timber and clearing of fields for cattle pastures troubled many of the Shoshone. When the Mormons shipped eight wagonloads of salmon from Lemhi Valley to Utah, something they had agreed not to do, the Shoshone had even more reason to be angry. The Mormons decided to abandon the fort and return to Utah after some of the angrier Tribe members attacked the fort, took all the cattle, and wounded a few of the Mormons while doing so. Some of the Shoshone upset by the actions of the other tribe members tried to make things better by returning the cattle, but the Mormons headed back to Utah anyway.

Even though the settlement lasted only about three years, the name given to it by the Mormons is still in use. Today places like the Lemhi River and Lemhi Valley remind us of one of the first non-Indian settlements in Idaho.

by Glenn Newkirk

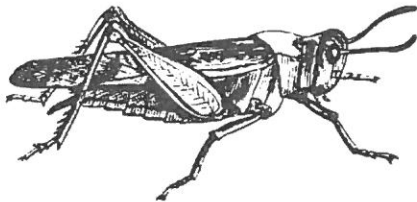


The Fun Page

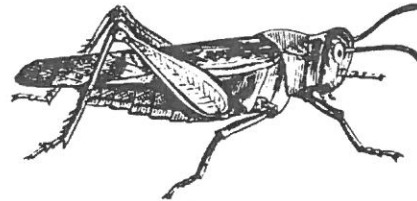
Grasshopper Trouble

Only two of these ten grasshoppers are exactly alike. Can you figure out which two?

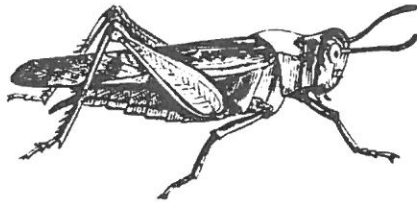
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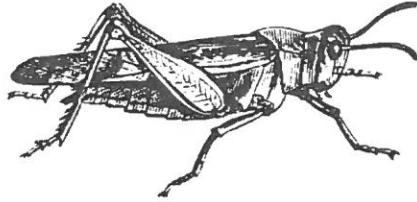
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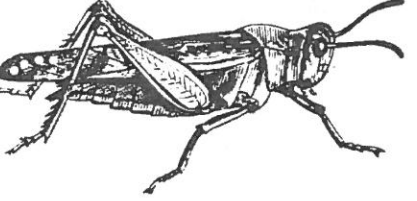
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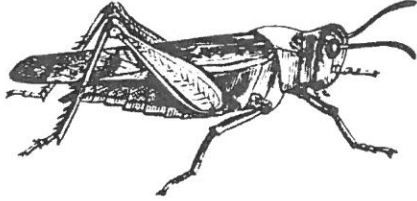
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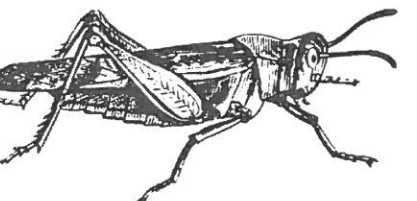
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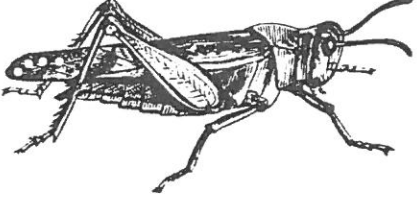
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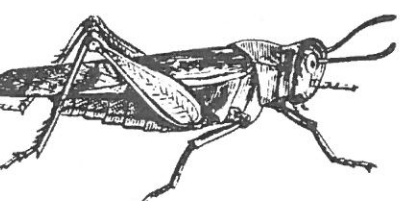
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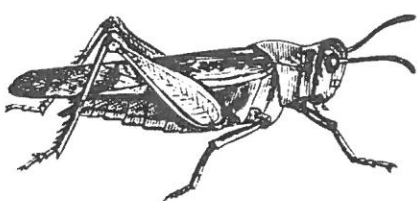
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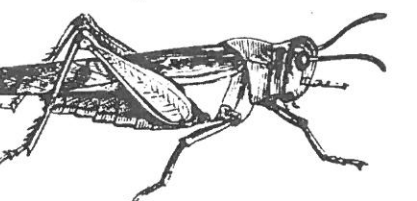
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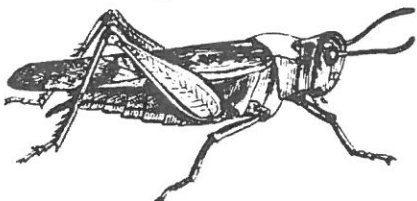
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Next Month's Activities

Well, we've told you all we know about Fort Lemhi and now it's your turn.

This month you can pick from one of the activities listed below or make up your own Fort Lemhi project and send it to our Prospector Headquarters. We'll take some of your best work and print it in next month's magazine.

Remember to include your name, the town and school where you are from, and the name of your Prospector Club. We can't wait to see what you come up with!

Design a Fort: Designing a fort in early Idaho was a serious project. Builders had to consider many things before they got to work. Where would people live? Where would they store their tools? How would they protect themselves? Could you design a fort to house your family and friends? Pretend you are an early settler in Idaho building a fort to live. Think about what life was like 150 years ago and what materials were available to build with. Draw us a picture of your perfect fort and label all the rooms and buildings.

Sacajawea: One of the most famous members of the Lemhi Shoshoni tribe was a woman named Sacajawea. This important Idahoan

uncover some interesting facts about Sacajawea. Then put together a few paragraphs about what you found and report back to us.



crossed half the continent as a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Tells us a little bit about this courageous woman. Go to your library and look on the Internet to

Mapping History: One of the best ways to learn about history is to study maps. Maps can teach the locations of important geographic features like mountains, rivers, and towns. To better understand the lives of the Shoshoni people and the Mormon pioneers we should look closely at a map to learn about where they lived. Can you help us create such a map? Do a little research in your library and see if you can create a map of Eastern Idaho and the Lemhi Valley. You can include natural features like rivers and mountains, historic features like Fort Lemhi, and current features, like highways and roads.

Send in your work by
December 15th to:

Prospector Club/Lucky Noah
Idaho State Historical Museum
610 North Julia Davis Drive
Boise, ID 83702
Or email it to us at
kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us