

This month's theme:
The Nez Perce War



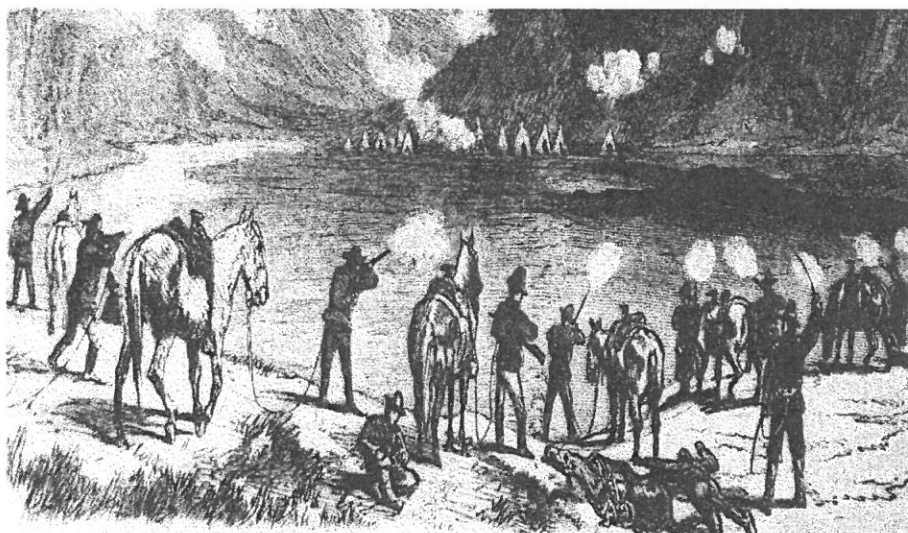
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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

PROSPECTOR

Feb.-March, 2009



The Nez Perce War

In the mid 1800's the Nez Perce tribe was known for its friendliness. If you know the story of Lewis and Clark in Idaho, you might remember that the Nez Perce people treated the visiting explorers with generosity and respect. Later, the tribe worked closely with missionaries and government officials who came to their land. Unfortunately though, like many other western tribes, this original good will would change.

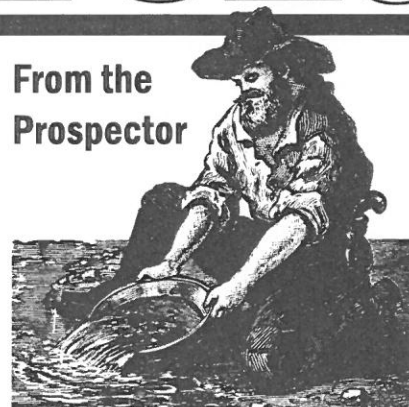
In 1860, a prospector named E.D. Pierce found gold on the Nez Perce reservation. This

discovery led to a rush of settlement on the tribe's land. Many of the new visitors traded their common sense for greed. Even though they knew it was against the law, people began to settle on Nez Perce land and crowd out the tribe.

The U.S. government realized there was a serious problem. If something wasn't done soon, the Nez Perce people and the settlers might begin to fight. Instead of forcing the new settlers to leave, the government's solution was to reduce the Nez Perce lands even

Continued on next page

From the Prospector



Howdy Prospectors

Unfortunately, gold miners don't always have the best historic reputation. When people discover gold, sometimes they throw their manners and common sense out the window. They get so busy thinking about how rich they are going to be that they forget to respect their neighbors. When gold was discovered in Idaho in the 1860's prospectors rushed here to try their luck. Some of these people claimed land that was already owned by the Native Americans. The U.S. Government tried to step in and solve the problem, but unfortunately this made things worse. This conflict between the new settlers and Indians turned into one of the most famous wars in Idaho history. Here's the sad tale of the Nez Perce War.

Lucky Noah

further.

Nez Perce leaders did not govern like the leaders of the United States. There wasn't one chief in charge of the entire tribe like a president or king. Instead there were many chiefs who were each leaders of small bands of Indians. This difference would lead to more trouble.

When the United States tried to reduce the Nez Perce tribe's land, they negotiated mostly with the chiefs who would be hurt least by a new agreement. A few of the Nez Perce bands had adapted the ways of the missionaries and worked as farmers. A new treaty would center the reservation on land these farmers already controlled. There were other Nez Perce though, who didn't want to become farmers and still lived their traditional lifestyle. They felt that a new

treaty would be a bad idea. Instead of a large reservation that included most of their ancestral homeland, the entire tribe would be forced to live in one small area. The U.S. Government knew they couldn't get the whole tribe to agree to the deal, so they only dealt with the chiefs that were on their side. A new treaty was signed without the consent of many of the Nez Perce leaders.

In a short time the agreement led to a tense situation. The United

States government insisted all the Nez Perce move back to the new, smaller reservation. But many of the tribe's leaders like Chief Joseph, Chief White Bird, Chief Looking Glass, and Chief Toohoolhoolzote did not agree. Finally, in the summer of 1877 the fragile peace broke and violence erupted.

Angered by the treatment of their people, two young Nez Perce warriors attacked and killed a group of settlers (some of whom had cheated or fought with the tribe in the past). Hearing of the murders,

pass was a disaster for the military. The Nez Perce quickly gained control of the steep battlefield and sent the soldiers running. The next big battle on the Clearwater River was fought to a standstill. Realizing the strength of the U.S. Army, the Nez Perce decided to move east across the treacherous Bitterroot Mountains. They hoped they could leave the Army behind and live with their old allies, the Crow, who lived on the other side of the mountain range. Little did they know, the difficult passage across the Bitterroots was only the beginning of their long journey.



The Nez Perce drive away the Army's horses at the Battle of Camas Meadows

the U.S. Army reacted swiftly. General Oliver O. Howard gathered together a group of soldiers to capture the Nez Perce and force them onto the reservation. Even though chiefs like White Bird, Joseph, and Looking Glass had different opinions of the situation, they banded together to defend their people.

The first battle at White Bird

Almost immediately upon crossing the mountains they came across a small group of soldiers who had set up a blockade. The Nez Perce easily maneuvered around the soldiers and continued on their way. The

next battle of the war was one of the worst. As the tribe was camped on the Big Hole River in Montana, General John Gibbon attacked with a large force of soldiers and citizen volunteers. The Army struck at dawn, while most of the tribe was still asleep. Many woman and children died in the fierce surprise attack. Although the Nez Perce suffered large losses, they were able to regroup and force the soldiers to retreat.

The Indians moved through the Lemhi Valley with the Army in pursuit. The next battle would be a big victory for the Nez Perce. At the battle of Camas Meadows, a small group of Nez Perce warriors circled back and snuck into the Army's camp. Instead of attacking the soldiers, the target was their horses. The stealthy Nez Perce men broke through the stockade and stole over two hundred horses and mules. This clever move was a big blow to the army's supplies and transportation.

Although both sides were weary from the long chase, the war continued. The Army followed the tribe as they wound their way through the area that became Yellowstone National Park and stayed close behind as the Indians headed north. The Nez Perce strategy had changed. Realizing that the Army wouldn't give up and with no help from their allies, the tribe rushed toward the Canadian border. After the famous Battle of Little Big Horn the year before, the Canadian government had given Sitting Bull, the Sioux leader who defeated General

Armstrong Custer, a safe place to live. The Nez Perce thought that if they could make it across the border, they could join the Sioux. Although they would be far from home, at least their families would be safe and the tribe would no longer be pursued by the Army.

The tribe pushed north, but the Army stayed close on their heels. Finally, within a day or two ride of the border, the two sides fought their final battle. On September 30, Colonel Nelson Miles caught up to the Indians on the edge of the Bear Paw Mountains. The Nez Perce were surprised, but quickly sprang into action. They dug pits and ditches with whatever tools they had and built stone barricades to protect themselves from the soldiers' guns. The battle was long, stretching out over five days, and the Nez Perce were tired. Food had run out. The

weather was cold and wet and there wasn't any fuel to make fires. The only two chiefs left alive were White Bird and Joseph. Joseph knew that if the tribe kept fighting it would mean more death and misery. He made the decision to try to negotiate a truce and end the war.

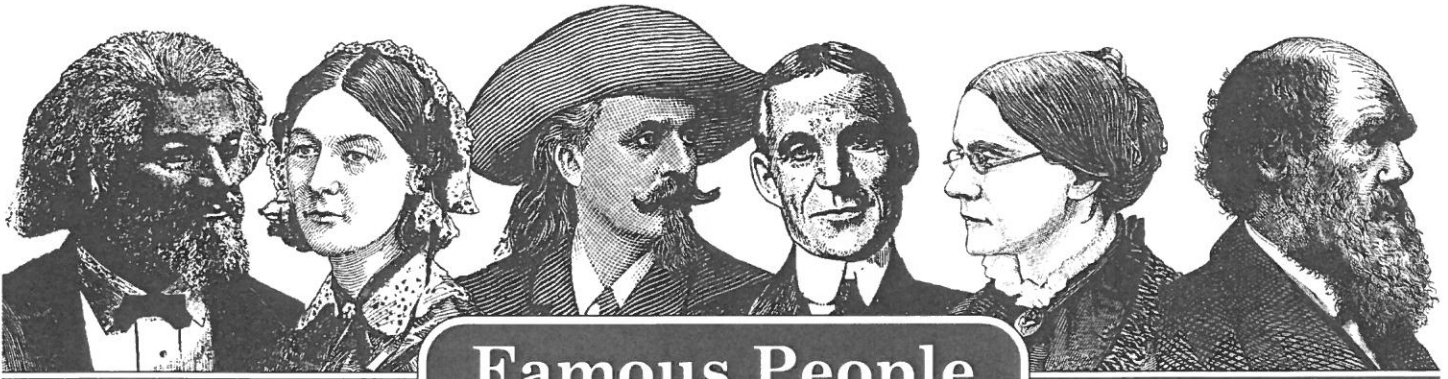
Although Chief White Bird and a few others escaped to Canada, Joseph and the remaining Nez Perce made a deal with Colonel Miles. The tribe agreed to stop fighting and return to the reservation the U.S. government had created. Unfortunately, the government broke their promise. Joseph and his remaining group were relocated to Oklahoma instead, where they spent eight years separated from their homeland and the rest of the tribe. Eventually, the group was allowed to return west, but Joseph and his family were forced to stay on a different reserva-

tion in Washington.

On September 21st, 1904, Chief Joseph died in exile. It was a sad ending to a very tragic chapter in our country's history. ❖



The Nez Perce hide in hand-dug pits at the Battle of the Bear Paws.



Famous People

General Oliver O. Howard

Many U.S. Army leaders involved in the Nez Perce War. Colonel Nelson Miles, Colonel John Gibbon, Colonel Samuel Sturgis, and Captain Charles Rown all commanded soldiers during the conflict. The military leader most connected to the war, though, was General Oliver O. Howard.

General Howard didn't begin his career in Idaho. Like many military leaders of the time, he first fought in the Civil War. General Howard commanded Union troops at some of the Civil War's most important battles; like Bull Run, Antietam, and Gettysburg. In the Battle of the Seven Pines Howard was seriously wounded. His wounds were so severe that the doctors had to amputate his arm.

After the Civil War, conflict between settlers and Native American tribes in the West began to worsen. Like many other Civil War leaders,

General Howard moved west to help control the Indian uprisings.

General Howard was present at the beginning of the Nez Perce War. His quick temper in early negotiations might have made a bad situation worse. During discussions with a group of Nez Perce leaders, General Howard was angered by the tone and words of Chief Toohoolhoolzote. Instead of calmly

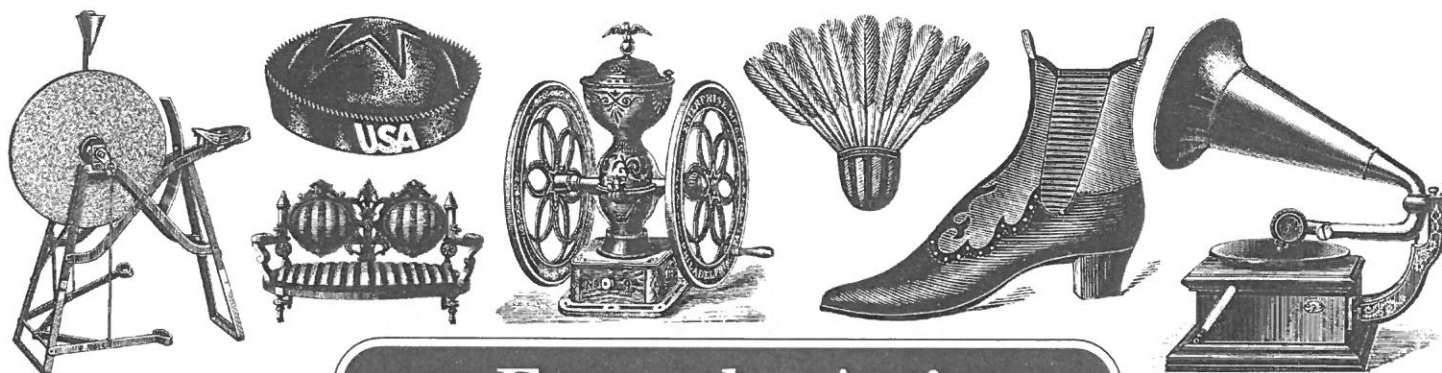
dealing with the Chief, General Howard had Toohoolhoolzote locked up for the remainder of the meeting. This action was very insulting to the Nez Perce leaders and may have added to the bad feelings between the two groups.

When the war broke out, General Howard was in command of the Army's troops. He led the soldiers in the Battle of the

Clearwater, but after the Nez Perce escaped across the Bitterroot Mountains, he had trouble keeping up. For the rest of the war, Howard's troops worked hard, but could never quite catch up with the tribe.

At the final Battle of the Bear Paws, it was another commander, Colonel Nelson Miles, who negotiated a truce with the Nez Perce. Even though Howard and his men had traveled hundreds of miles in pursuit of the Nez Perce, Colonel Miles got most of the glory. ❖





From the Attic

Chief Joseph's Speech

After five days of fierce fighting at the Battle of the Bear Paws, the U.S. Army and Nez Perce tribe began to negotiate a truce. Many Nez Perce had died in the months of war and only Chief Joseph and Chief White Bird remained as leaders. Of the two, Chief Joseph came forward to represent his people in negotiations with the Army. His short speech to General Miles is still remembered today as the sad ending to this tragic war. The speech was recorded by Lieutenant C.E.S. Wood who witnessed the event. Although it is possible that Lt. Wood changed some words, most believe that it is a faithful account of what was spoken on that day.

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before I have in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. The old men are all killed. It is the young

men who say yes or no. He who led the young men is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills and

have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are, perhaps freezing to death. I want time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs, I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever. ❖





The Fun Page

The Hand Game

Many Native American tribes across the central and western portions of the United States play a version of the hand game. Nobody is quite sure when and where the game started, but today it is a very popular pastime. People compete in huge tournaments across the West, sometimes gambling large amounts of money on the outcome of the games. The basic rules of the hand game are simple, but it takes a lot of practice to be a good player.

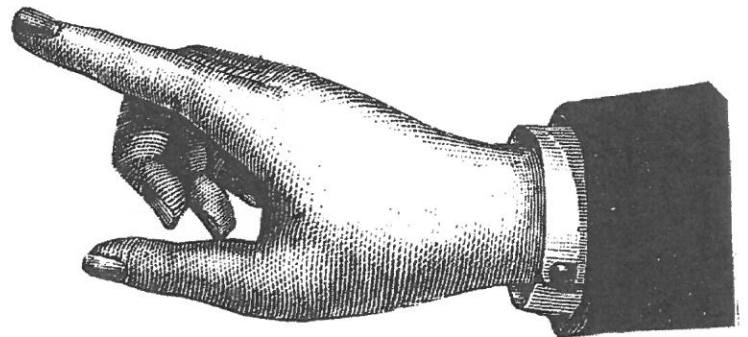
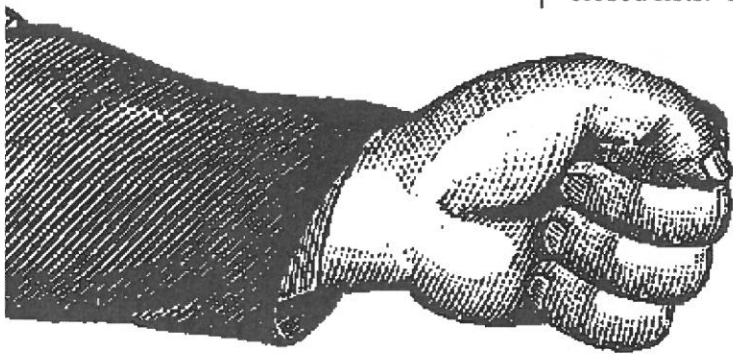
Each player starts out with two sticks or rocks that are small enough

to hide in one's hands. One of the objects is marked and one is blank. Each player also needs an equal amount of counting sticks (toothpicks work well). Tournament players might start out with as many as thirty counting sticks, but ten each is good to start. Players sit directly across from each other and take turns playing. One player takes his sticks or rocks and begins to switch them between his hands. The player can do anything he wants to conceal the placement of the objects, even hiding them behind his back. When he is ready, he holds out both of his closed fists. The other player then

has to guess which hand holds the marked object. If the guess is correct the guesser wins one of her opponent's counting sticks. If the guess is wrong the guesser gives up one of her counting sticks. Play continues until one side has all of the sticks.

You can also play in teams. For example, two rows of three people each can sit across from each other. The game is still the same, but teammates take turns concealing the object and guessing.

The hand game is almost always accompanied by singing and drumming. The loud rhythm gets the players' hearts pounding and makes the game more exciting. Ask your teacher if you can try a hand game tournament in your class. ❖





Next Month's Activities

Well, we've told you all we know about the Nez Perce War, now it's your turn. This month you can pick from one of the activities listed below or make up your own 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!

Mapping the War: The Nez Perce War covered a lot of geography. The Nez Perce crossed rivers, mountains, and plains in three different states. One of the ways you can better understand a historical event is to make a map. The map can help you organize your thoughts and visualize where the story took place. Can you make a map of the Nez Perce War? Do a little research and try to find the path the Nez Perce took as they tried to elude the Army. Remember to include major geographic features like mountains and rivers and mark where the battles took place.

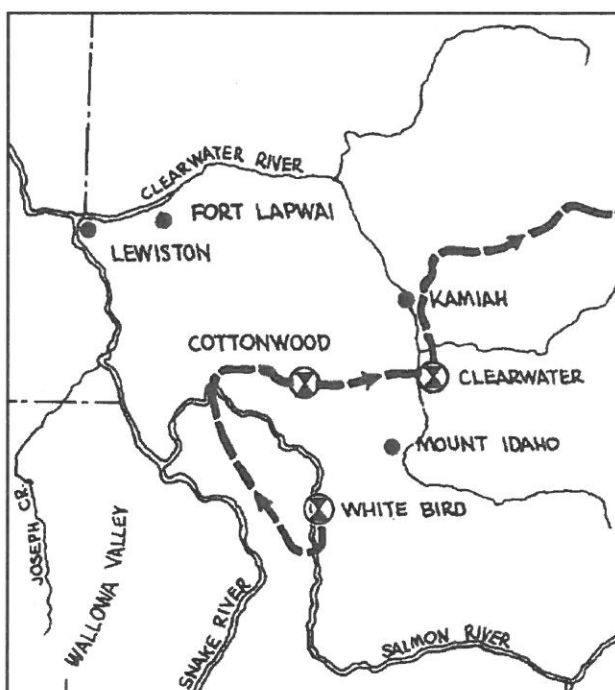
Remembering the War:

Historically, the Nez Perce people had a completely oral culture. In an oral culture, history isn't written down. Instead it is passed from generation to generation by speaking and listening. In most Indian cul-

pass on that information to the next generation in a way that can be spoken around a campfire. We can't wait to see what you come up with!

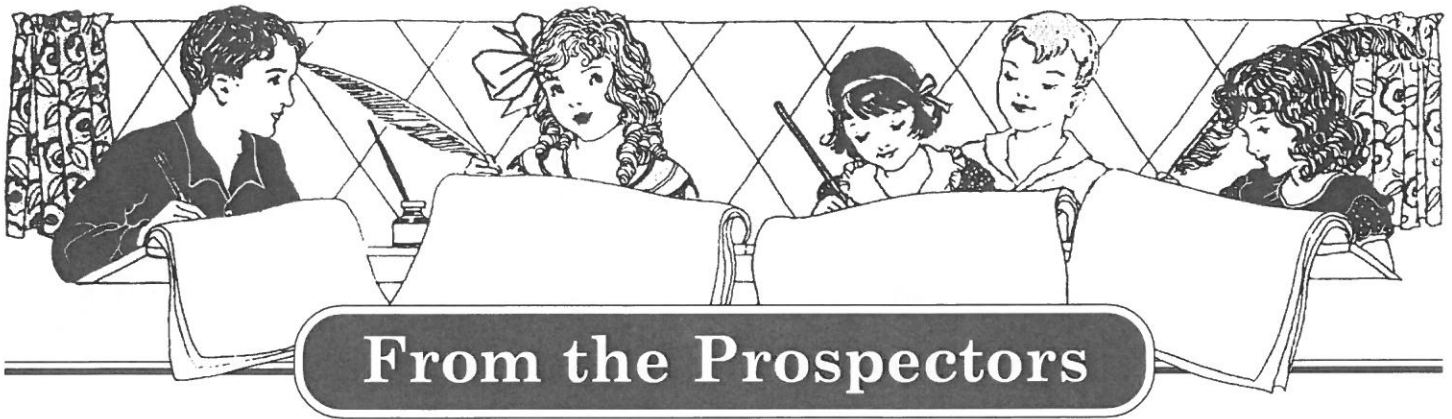
Other Indian Conflicts:

Unfortunately, the United States Government has a long history of going to war with Indian nations. The Nez Perce War was one of the most famous, but there were many others. For instance, the Bannocks, the Sioux, and the Apache all fought with the U.S. Government at one time or another. Do a little research into another Indian conflict. Tell us why it started and what the final outcome was. Write a few paragraphs about what you learned and share your knowledge with the rest of the Prospectors.

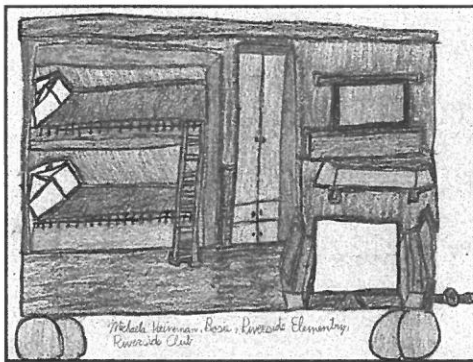


tures this is done through storytelling, but throughout history songs and poems were also used. See if you can write a song or poem to pass on the story of the Nez Perce War. Research some of the people and places involved in the conflict and imagine that you must

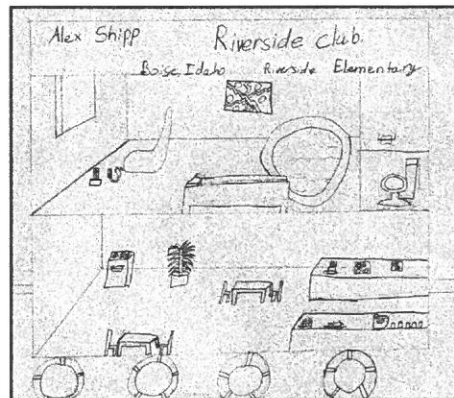
Send in your work by May 10th to:
Prospector Club/Lucky Noah
Idaho State Historical Museum
610 North Julia Davis Drive
Boise, ID 83702
Or email it to us at
kurt.zwolfer@ishs.idaho.gov



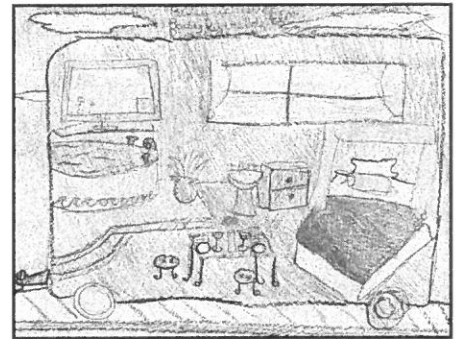
Luxury Train Cars



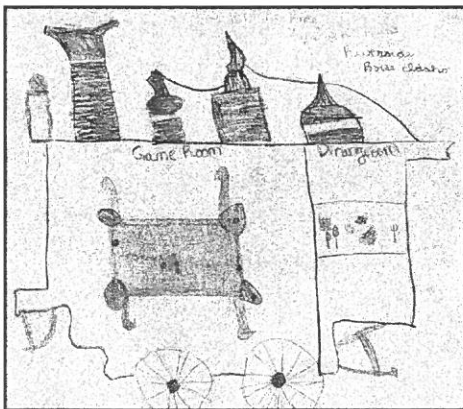
Michaela Heinman
Riverside Elementary
Boise



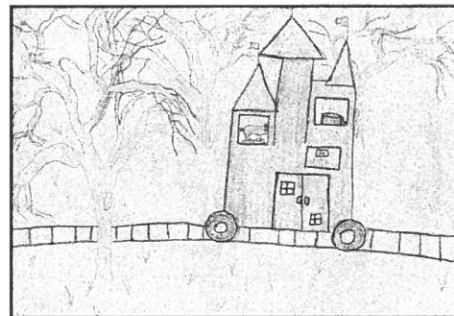
Alex Shipp
Riverside Elementary
Boise



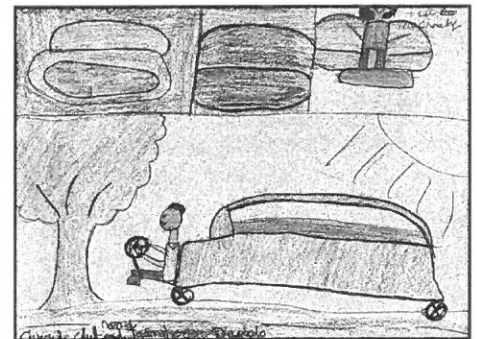
Bailey Schieve
Riverside Elementary
Boise



Lila Hunt
Riverside Elementary
Boise



Addison Pennington
Riverside Elementary
Boise



Jasmine Delgado
Riverside Elementary
Boise

Witness to a Crash

Dear Marie: I still can't believe it! I saw a live train crash! I don't know whether to be happy, sad, angry, mad, overjoyed, or what. But, boy, am I glad I wasn't on it! Our farm is built out in the middle of nowhere by a sharp bend in the railroad tracks. Even though there is a railroad, we don't ever see trains around here. One day, I had just finished feeding the chickens when I heard a train! I ran over to say hello, but my legs took me away! For they must have known that trouble lurked! I was back at the house, watching the train go around the bend, from the doorsteps. As I watched, THUMP! The train landed on its side. And I was just standing there, silent. It smelled of gas, rotten eggs, smoke, and it was just plain AWFUL! The conductor led all the people out. I think the train was going too fast for the bend. A woman came over to talk to me. Her name was Mrs. McIntire. She told me, "I thought the conductor fell asleep." And I said, "I'll go talk to him." So I did, and said, "Mrs. McIntire said she thought you fell asleep!" He just said, "I was wide awake trying to slow the train!" "Oh," I said. I hope they'll be okay. Sincerely, Megan

*Megan Busz
Idaho Virtual Academy
Nampa*

One day while driving my train, we had very bad weather. We were going down a very big hill. Then I felt the speed rising fast. I asked my men what was happening, but all they did was stare out the window with looks of fear on their faces. I saw millions

of rocks tumbling down the hill. It was a landslide. The speed was rising. I did not know what to do. The hill was getting steeper. We had passengers. All their screams rang in my ears. Then it got worse. We were not able to switch to the next track so the tracks ended. A few seconds later we were off the tracks. We were spinning wildly out of control. As soon as the spinning ended we tipped over. Luckily, there were no deaths, but there were plenty of injuries. There was plenty of moaning as I struggled to get out of the tipped train. I saw dust flying everywhere. It took me a while to notice the huge tower of rocks. I had plenty of wounds and scratches. Afterwards, all the people were at least happy to see their relatives and friends alive in the station. Lastly, I have learned that trains can be dangerous so I never drove a train again to avoid all the injuries.

*Joelle Mayo
Riverside Elementary
Boise*

It was a foggy winter in the late 1800's when I was driving an amazing train right next to a mountain. I could just barely see anything in view. Everyone on the train was listening to the radio they were having a wonderful time.

I was driving at a medium pace when all of a sudden; a great big landslide came crashing right on top of the train. Everyone started screaming at the top of their lungs. We rolled a couple of times. When the train finally stopped, I feared that everyone on the train had died! Luckily, I was wrong.

One by one, people started

walking out of the train dizzily. Some of them were unharmed and others were badly injured. I made a fire so everyone could get warm. After about an hour, another train came by and helped everyone!

*Karissa Kaypaghian
Riverside Elementary
Boise*

I am Alice Markinson. At the time I was only 11. It was a nice sunny day. They were going downhill, when suddenly I heard the sharp screech of metal. Then the train started to tip from side to side. Confusion and screaming filled the air. I was terrified and didn't know what to do or if my family was okay because they were on a different part of the train. The strong aroma of blood was in the air. I thought quickly on what to do. I would go the closest window on the side it wasn't falling. Suddenly it swayed very big. It was my chance. I just needed to get to a window. If it was closed I would be ready to break it open. I ran to the window terrified the window would be locked. I picked up a plate and as hard as I could I chucked it at the window which left a loud clang. I looked out and the ground was moving so much faster than normal. I thought the swaying was bad enough. Suddenly there was a loud crash. I looked out the window and saw that my train hit another and debris was flying everywhere. Without thinking, I jumped.

*Natalie Bruner
Riverside Elementary
Boise*

Boise Depot

The Boise Train Depot is a historic Spanish style structure. It was designed by New York architects. The building was opened in 1925. The Boise train depot includes the great hall that is 3,542 square feet. The Boise Train Depot hosts corporate parties, fund-raising events, weddings, receptions, businesses, breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. The Boise Train Depot, the great hall, and the bell tower are open from 2-6 p.m., Mondays, except holidays. The admission is free. The Boise Train Depot is located at 1104 Royal Boulevard, Boise, Idaho 83706.

The Boise Train Depot no longer uses trains.

The Boise Train Depot is very beautiful inside, but there is also plenty to explore outside. In front of it there is Platt Gardens which has some cool rocks to climb on. There is a small man-made cave and frog pond. To make reservations call 384-42228. It still stands here today and is a very interesting place to learn about.

*McKayla DeLorey
Riverside Elementary
Boise*

Boise's old Union Pacific Railroad depot was built in 1925. On April 16, 1925 the first transcontinental train arrived at the station. By 1968 U.P. had all but one passenger train left in Boise, the Portland Rose. The Union Pacific ended service here in 1971. In 1996 Boise City took control of the building and it's now used for weddings and parties.

*Pictures and Text by
Schylar Voshell
Riverside Elementary
Boise*



Union Pacific History

The Union Pacific railroad has a lot of history in Idaho and my family has a lot of history with it as well. My grandpa and my great-grandpa both worked for the Union Pacific Railroad in Nampa, Idaho

My great-grandpa started working for the Union Pacific in 1945. He worked for them for 33 years before returning on May, 3 1978. He worked for a division of the Union Pacific Railroad called the Pacific Fruit Express. They were more in charge of hauling produce across the country, mostly to New York. When he first started in 1945, there were no mechanical

refrigeration cars. They had to use ice. Each car carried 11,500 pounds of ice to keep the produce cold. My great-grandpa checked produce loads and added ice. The cars mostly carried potatoes, onion, and plums. Sometimes they also carried apples, pears, and lettuce. Later he worked in the office checking the paperwork for each load. He worked the night shift and checked about 600 cars a night.

My grandpa worked for Union Pacific for 7 years between working at the Old Idaho Penitentiary and the new state prison. Like my great-grandpa, he also worked for the Pacific Fruit Express. He

was a welder and repaired train cars. He also did a lot of carpentry work. Sometimes it took months to repair a car while other times it only took days. In his spare time, he could make little things out of metal. He made belt buckles, an airplane, and one time he made a lock. He even made a pig for my mom when she was a little girl.

I think it was interesting to interview my grandpa and my great-grandpa and hear their stories. I also like the little pig that my grandpa made and my mom saved.

*Photos and Text by
Jacan Habersetzer
Riverside Elementary
Boise*

