

North Idaho History from “The Guide to North Idaho”



Installment #2: Indians Gain New Name

For thousands of years nations of tribal people lived in family bands along the lakes and rivers of northern Idaho. The **Kootenai [Coo – ten-eee] Indians** lived to the north, near what is now the U.S./Canadian border. The **Nimipu** lived further south around the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers. The **Schee-Chu-Umsh** occupied much of the land between the Kootenai and Nimipu. In the early 1800s French speaking fur traders gave French names to some of the Tribes. The Schee-Chu-Umsh was given the

name **Coeur d’Alene [Core-duh-lane]**, which was an attempt to describe their sharp trading practices. They were said to have hearts (Coeur) as sharp as the point of an awl (Alene). The Nimipu became **Nez Perce** ‘pierced nose’ and a small tribe living near the Kootenai became known as the **Pend Oreille** ‘ear pendent’.

During the fur trade era, tribal people were introduced to many western goods and ideas, including Christianity. The idea of men wearing black robes delivering a great prayer from a book was so appealing that a neighboring Tribe in western Montana sent a delegation to St. Louis several times looking for a priest. **Father Jean DeSmet** responded by establishing Saint Mary’s Mission in 1841. When news about the mission reached the Coeur d’Alene Tribe they were convinced that an old tribal legend about men wearing black robes bringing them a great spiritual truth was true.

In 1842 Father DeSmet came to the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and established the **Mission of The Sacred Heart**. A small log structure was built on the St. Joe River, but due to flooding was moved to a high knoll overlooking the Coeur d’Alene River where a large church was completed in 1853. Designed in a Greco-Roman style by Father Anthony Ravalli, the new church was built from local timbers, including six large Doric columns at the entrance of the building. Cutting, dressing and carving the timbers were done by the Jesuit priests and members of the tribe using simple hand tools.

The Mission of The Sacred Heart, **Idaho’s oldest standing building**, became a state park in 1975. The Visitor Center at the Old Mission State Park is the permanent home of Sacred Encounters, an exhibition telling the story of the “Blackrobes” and the Coeur d’Alene Tribe. (Pictures of Mission of the Sacred Heart, Cataldo, Idaho).



Over the next few months, a new installment of the history of northern Idaho will be appearing under the Region Retreat 2019 tab on the Rocky Mountain Region website (rmrega.org). The new installment will appear each time Border to Border is published. With each installment, you will find a question. Send the correct answer to each question to Connie Fudge (fudgesneedlecandy@gmail.com) and your name will be put into a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to Nordic Needle. You do not have to attend Region Retreat 2019 – Linger at the Lake – to be eligible to win the gift certificate but you must be a member of Rocky Mountain Region - EGA. Only one (1) entry per installment question per person, please.

Question #2: What architectural style was the 2nd Mission of the Sacred Heart built in? INTERESTING FACTOID: The Sacred Encounters Exhibit, in the Old Mission State Park, cost \$3.26 million to build and holds artifacts from the Smithsonian and other major museums.

