

A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Pocatello, Idaho

EARLY SETTLEMENT IN POCATELLO

The first organized effort by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to settle permanently in Idaho (then designated Oregon Territory) occurred in 1855 with the establishment of a community near Native Americans at Fort Lemhi, a few miles north of Tendoy. President Brigham Young visited the fort in April 1857, but conflicts and disruptions with Native Americans caused the settlement to disband in March 1858.

During the settlement effort at Fort Lemhi in the 1850s, Church members became acquainted with Chief Arimo, and in the 1870s numerous members of the Shoshone and Bannock tribes—including Chiefs Pocatello and Sagwitch and many members of the Northwestern band of the Shoshone—traveled to Utah and were baptized as members of the Church. Chief Sagwitch's band also helped construct the Logan Utah Temple, which was completed in 1884.

The next settlement effort was established in 1860 at Franklin. Settlers there assumed they were still within the boundaries of Utah Territory but years later discovered they had located about a half-mile inside Idaho Territory.

The Utah and Northern Railroad was constructed from Brigham City, Utah, to Montana during the 1870s. Much of the construction was undertaken by northern Utah Church members. Pocatello was a small station and didn't receive much attention and settlement until 1882 when the Oregon Short Line (OSL) Railroad was constructed from Wyoming to Oregon. A depot and hotel were built in Pocatello in 1883.

CHURCH GROWTH

The first branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in Pocatello on Sunday, May 6, 1888, at the home of William Edwards. William Willison was sustained to serve as branch president.

A Relief Society (the Church's organization for women) was organized in the Pocatello Branch on July 11, 1888.

The branch's minute book entry for July 24, 1888, states that there were 178 members in the congregation.

In 1890, a meetinghouse was constructed on the corner of Center Street and Garfield Avenue. The new building was described in a newspaper article as being a "good and neat frame meeting-house, 50x24 feet, and seated mostly with chairs. They have also purchased a suitable organ and the choir is a good one."

By the end of 1900, there were 107 families living in the Pocatello Ward. Today, the Church has continued to grow and bless the community with 20 stakes (a geographical grouping of multiple congregations, similar to a diocese) or approximately 61,000 people living in the area.

THE COMMUNITY AND CHURCH TODAY

Earlier this year, the Church partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture to provide food relief for Native Americans. On February 1, 2021, a truck delivered 40,000 pounds of food to a Church meetinghouse on the Fort Hall Reservation in southeastern Idaho. It was the third of three deliveries to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

In the general conference of the Church held April 2, 2017, President Thomas S. Monson announced plans to construct a temple in Pocatello. The Pocatello Idaho Temple will be Idaho's sixth (following Idaho Falls, Boise, Rexburg, Twin Falls and Meridian), with plans to build another temple in Burley. The groundbreaking ceremony for the Pocatello Idaho Temple was held March 16, 2019, with many of the Church's interfaith friends and leaders turning the soil together.



