

# Fort Hall



Fort Hall was one of the most important landmarks on the Oregon Trail. The British trading post was originally built by American Nathaniel Wyeth along the Snake River in 1834. Three years later, in 1837 it was purchased by a Britain's Hudson Bay Company. They improved the structure by encasing the square log stockade with adobe brick.

"Paid a visit to Capt. Grant. Fort Hall is a small and rather ill constructed Fort, built of 'Dobies.' It was established in the summer of 1834 by Nathaniel Wyeth, a yankee. He could not compete with the H.B. [Hudson's Bay] Company and finally sold out to them. The Fort is near the entrance of Portneuf into Snake River. The river bottoms are wide and have some fertile lands, but much is injured by the silt deposits of the waters from the neighboring hills. Wheat, turnips have been grown here with success. Cattle thrive well."

--Theodore Talbot, Sept. 14, 1843

Within a few years after the British purchased the post it became a major stopping place for thousands of Americans traveling west along the Oregon Trail.



"It was really the only place where they can have supplies, where they can meet other people and where they can take a break between Soda Springs and the rest of the most arduous part of the journey. It plays a significant role in the landmarks of the trail and so for trail travelers they are keeping track of where they are according to landmarks like South Pass and Fort Hall. The Hudson Bay Company though is a British trading firm. They really don't care about American settlement and ultimately they will be forced to leave the region so, it is an ironic relationship there."

--Laura Woodworth Nye, History Chair, Idaho State University



Fort Hall was shut down in 1855 after the Ward massacre which occurred in the Boise area much further west on the trail. But the escalated tensions between the emigrants and the Native Americans made commerce difficult. The U.S. military built a second Fort Hall years later northeast of Snake River. The original Fort Hall quickly fell into disrepair and little remains of it today. The site, marked with a simple marker is all that remains today. It is on the Shoshone-Bannock reservation and tribal permission is needed to visit the area. If you want to see what Fort Hall used to look like an excellent replica has been constructed south of the reservation in the city of Pocatello.